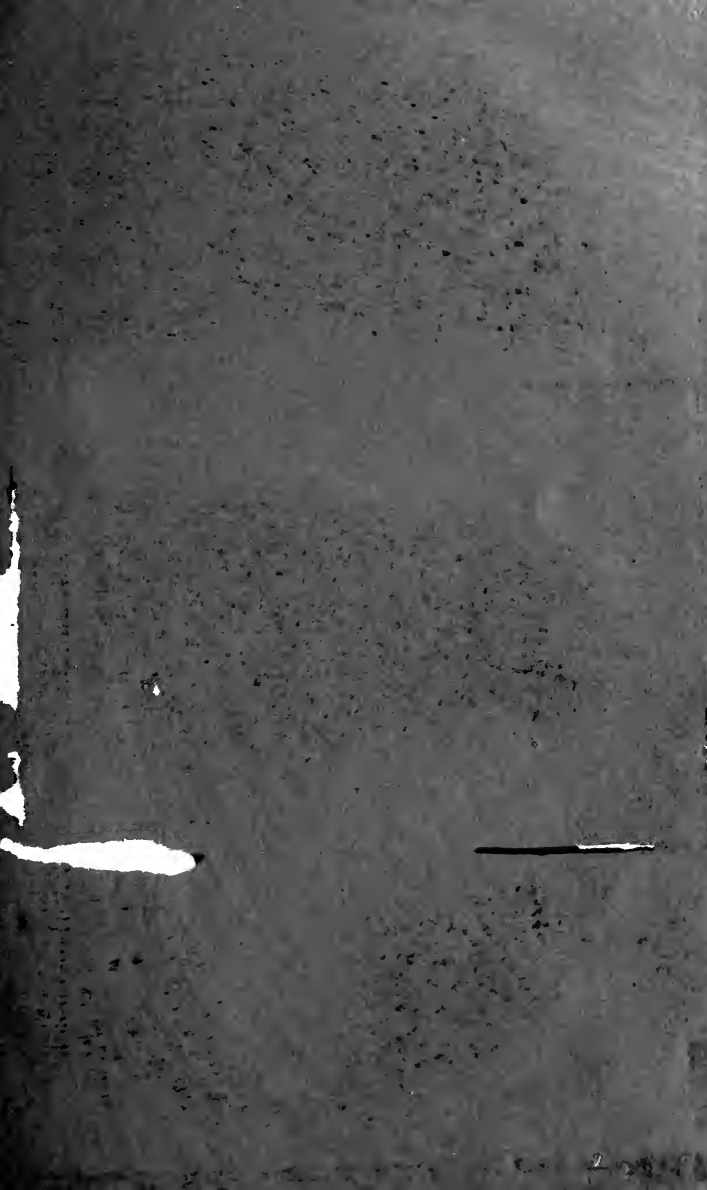


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THE RELATIONS OF CHRIST

AS

GOD: CREATOR; AND REDEEMER.

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ALL AND IN ALL.

THE RELATIONS OF CHRIST,

AS

GOD: CREATOR; AND REDEEMER.

BY

REV. WILLIAM NIXON,

Formerly at Montrose.

EDINBURGH:

JOHNSTONE, HUNTER & CO.

AND JAMES GEMMELL.

1882.

Essential - 1882

P R E F A C E.

THIS volume has been prepared more immediately for the purpose of placing in the hands of the members of the congregation to whom the author so long ministered, a summary of the great truths which he endeavoured to explain, illustrate, and enforce. It was always his aim to express these truths of the Bible as much as possible in its own language; while, as occasion occurred, using both the ideas and the phraseology of others, when he found it difficult or impossible otherwise to set the point under consideration in so clear and satisfactory a light. Of a number of the discourses, each is the substance of more than one as they were actually delivered; and some who heard them will probably miss much of the practical and especially the extemporaneous matter that constituted considerable portions of them as spoken. The contents of the volume have received their present shape, in order to form a sort of series, embracing many particulars on which, in his earlier days, the author had his difficulties, and containing such solutions as satisfied himself; in the hope that they may help a little in saving some from the popular deceits that are being taught and received as the highest wisdom, since the best provision against such deceits is to fill the teachable with those truths that lie before

us in the Book which God has given as the revelation and the record of His mind and will.

The discourse, XIV., on National Duty to Christ, is in substance, though in an altered form, a reprint of one delivered before the General Assembly of the Free Church, when retiring from the Moderatorship in 1869. It is inserted here because the subject deeply concerns Christ's relations, will, and glory; because our church has taken herself solemnly bound to place her principle in reference to it in the forefront of all her contendings; and because this principle must be embodied in any legal settlement of the question that is being agitated, and likely to be agitated more and more, if that settlement is to have the divine blessing resting on it, and to operate for the nation's well-being.

The author has only to add that the volume as a whole is an earnest however imperfect effort to show, that redemption in Christ through His blood, involving His deity and humanity, and the mysterious never-ending union of the two natures in His one person, as well as His creative preserving and governing supremacy over the universe, is the one great theme of all the divine revelations and records of which the Bible is composed, and that this glorious gospel and the Holy Scriptures, as the record of it, exhibit at once a harmony and a grandeur corresponding to the grace which they breathe.

EDINBURGH, *Dec.* 1881.

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CHRIST ALL AND IN ALL.

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ALL AND IN ALL.

I.

THE UNAVOIDABLE ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTION.

“What think ye of Christ?”—MATT. xxii. 42.

THE last week of Christ's ministry on earth was running out. He had thrown off all reserve, and, in the midst of His enemies, was giving open testimony to His own dignity and claims. On the first day of that week He made His public entry into Jerusalem, and returned at night to Bethany. On the second day, after blasting, by His word, the fruitless fig-tree, to which He came on His way to the city, He returned to the Temple, and summarily expelled the traffickers who were defiling it. On the third day, which was the most solemn of all the days of His public teaching, amidst a variety of addresses, full both of tenderness and of terror, He uttered awfully awakening testimonies against the husbandmen of God's vineyard, for their violence to His servants, and their approaching murder of His Son¹—against the faithless builders of God's house for rejecting its Chief Corner-Stone²—and against their wilful blindness to the prophetic words concerning Himself as at once the Lord of David and David's son.³ He then returned to Bethany; remained there all the fourth day; returned on the fifth to keep the Passover, and to institute the Supper; was taken that night by His enemies; was crucified on the sixth; lay in the grave on the seventh; and on the first day of the week rose again.

So ignorant even of their own Scriptures were these proud Pharisees who had gathered around Jesus, that, when

¹ Matt. xxi.

² Matt. xxi.

³ Matt. xxii.

He asked them how David's son could also be called by David his Lord, "no man was able to answer Him a word; neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask Him any more questions." Similar ignorance of Christ as set forth in His Word—ignorance having its seat in darkening, corrupting pride, and in other depraved passions of the human heart—has been at the foundation of all the dishonouring opinions, entertained and spread by learned and unlearned adversaries of the gospel, concerning His character and work. Probably, too, there never was a period in which deeper, more prejudiced, and more wilful ignorance of Christ prevailed, than prevails at present, and that in the midst of such overweening conceit of a more thorough and perfect knowledge of Him. And as the prominent, and in most cases self-constituted, guides and leaders of the world grow still wiser in their own imaginations on this divine subject, we shall be found drawing nearer and nearer to the crisis, of which we are forewarned by Him who seeth the end from the beginning, in the words, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Not the less true is it, at the same time, that the judgments which men form, and the dispositions which they cherish, and the words which they utter, and the conduct which they pursue, with reference to the person and work of Christ, His character and claims, are deciding, and shall continue to decide, unalterably, their relations to God, and their final destiny. Hence the unutterable importance of the question to all to whom the Word of God comes, "What think ye of Christ?"

I. THE ANSWER GIVEN TO THIS QUESTION BY THE WORD OF GOD.

According to the Scriptures, Christ is God equally with the Father. He is THE WORD that was in the beginning,

that was with God, and that was God. By Him all things were created that are in heaven and on earth, and by Him all things consist. There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. All the visions of God from the beginning are visions of His Son. All divinely appointed prophets, priests, and kings were types of Christ. All acceptable sacrifices from the beginning were types of His sacrifice. The Spirit that was in the prophets was the Spirit of Christ. The main subjects of their predictions were His person and work. The temple in Jerusalem was His temple. The heavenly glory above the mercy-seat was His glory. The temple typified His humanity, in which the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. And the ancient people whom He separated from the rest of the world, typified the holy nation of the saints, whom He has redeemed, and is now from age to age gathering out of the world to Himself.

When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. As God manifested in the flesh, by His obedience unto death, He provided for sinners of mankind complete and everlasting redemption. He proved, and continues to prove Himself mighty to save. Even in His state of humiliation, He showed His knowledge and control of all things in nature, including the hearts of men, the powers of darkness, and the angels of light. In His dying agonies, He shook the earth, covered the face of the heavens with blackness, and forced from creation around, such acknowledgments of His divinity, as made an onlooking Roman officer to say, "Truly this was the Son of God."

Then the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, having raised His Son Jesus from the dead, set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. In the exercise of His Headship, He appoints all the means of salvation, and gives the Holy Spirit to render them effectual, and thus regenerates, calls, pardons, renders righteous, sanctifies, and brings to glory, all who are redeemed from the ruined world; and He is also about to clear the earth of His adversaries, and to make a blessed change on the condition of mankind, by making bare His holy arm in the eyes of the nations, and so causing all ends of the earth to see the salvation of our God. Finally, when He has accomplished the salvation of all who have been given to Him in the everlasting covenant, He will rend the heavens and come down, fill the great white throne of judgment, raise the dead, gather the whole human race before His tribunal, separate the righteous from the wicked, welcome the righteous to the kingdom of the Father, and cause the wicked to depart into everlasting fire; and then consummate the wonderful history of this world throughout the whole course of time, in the unceasing homage of the redeemed and obedient universe before the throne of God and of the Lamb. In a word, in respect of His deity and His relations within the Godhead, as the Eternal Word and Son of God, the same in substance and equal in power and glory with the Father and the Holy Ghost; in respect of His being the Creator and Preserver of the universe, filling it with the tokens of His infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness; and in respect of His being the only Redeemer of men,

saving them from all sin and misery, and raising them to all holiness and happiness, and by His redeeming work exercising a supreme and blessed influence over the boundless universe for ever and ever:—in respect of these, the relations and actings of Christ, He is indeed all and in all.

II. THE ANSWERS GIVEN BY DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MEN TO THE QUESTION, "WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?"

I. The answer given by *open adversaries* of Christ and His gospel.

This question is at present getting much of their attention. Evidently they are confident in their ability, as they are actively labouring, to root out from the earth the ordinary faith of all true Christians in their great Saviour and Lord. Although the ignorance of the Scripture testimony to Christ which these adversaries display, is only equalled by their enmity to Him, their ignorance and enmity are equalled by the airs of knowledge and authority with which they take up and dispose of this whole question. And so from seats of learning, from lecture-rooms, and even from pulpits; through pamphlets and periodicals, and still more pretentious volumes; through the newspaper press in every shape and form; and in a spirit and in terms of the utmost boldness, self-confidence, and daring, there are being poured over this and other lands, the most ill-informed, erroneous, profane, and blasphemous opinions and sentiments as to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The principle underlying much of this treatment of these divine truths and realities is, that nothing is to be received as true, except that of which we can take knowledge by our external senses, or that which our natural understandings can thoroughly examine, comprehend, and approve. Self-confidence, self-consciousness, and self-worship are thus supplanting the homage due to the unseen and unsearch-

able God, and He is still and even increasingly disowned by the same pride of heart, through which, since his fall, man has all along refused to know, acknowledge, and honour the High and Holy One. An evil state of mind like this, when patronised and made popular by votaries of mere natural knowledge and human wisdom, and when permitted by God in just judgment to prevail, spreads like wildfire, till multitudes discard all fixed and effective belief in the most important teachings of the Divine Word, in its peculiar doctrines, in heaven and hell, in the moral and even natural attributes of deity, in the reality or the perfection of His moral law and government, in the difference between religious truth and error, in the nature and consequences of sin, in the nature, necessity, and reality of a true and proper atonement for transgression, and in the character and work of the Divine Redeemer. And so as men do not like to retain God in their knowledge, He gives them over to a mind void of judgment, and sends them strong delusions, so that they believe a lie.

As a matter of course, the enmity thus prevailing against evangelical doctrine is specially directed against the scriptural view of Christ's person and work, which is, in fact, the source and centre of all evangelical truth. For right views of His person are bound up with right views of His redeeming work. Right views of His redeeming work involve right views of the ruined condition of men as sinners. Right views of the ruined state of man, involve right views of the perfection and claims of the divine law, of which all sin is the transgression. Right views of the divine law depend on right views of the perfections of God, from which His law emanates. Take away the truth as to Christ's person and work, and all correct views of the other truths just stated, and of all kindred vital truths, will perish from the minds of men. Moreover, as both the fundamental doctrine

of Christ's person and work, and the whole fabric of truth that rests upon it, depend on the *divine authority* of the Bible as a revelation from God, we have in these facts the reason of the deadly efforts making to destroy man's faith in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, as well as in their revelation of Christ as God the Saviour.

This active enmity to Christ and His Word is bearing bitter fruits. Not a few are drinking in infidel opinions. Many more are encouraged and strengthened in their apathy and indifference to Christ and His gospel, seek their satisfaction in the gains and pleasures of earth, and live practically as enemies of His cross.

Way is being made for the active progress of this prevailing opposition to the truth, by carrying it on under insidious pretensions of only teaching the truth under higher forms and more advanced aspects of it. The teachings and authority of the Bible are set aside, under pretence of only casting aside interpretations of it that are at length found to be untenable and obsolete, and of retaining or recovering, and presenting for acceptance, all that is found in it in accordance with purer reason and a more perfect knowledge. And so, under pretence of preserving all that is entitled to belief in regard to Christ, in reality His person and work are being stripped and robbed of the highest and most vital of all their characteristics, and presented in a light that would render Him unworthy of love or of confidence.

This enmity to Christ is an old enmity, and will prove, as hitherto, unavailing. In vain His adversaries say, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." In vain they take counsel together against Him: He shall sit as King on His holy hill of Zion; and the heathen shall be given to Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. He will frustrate the tokens of liars, and

make diviners mad, turn wise men backward, and make their knowledge foolish. He will dash His enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel. In the face of all the hostility that is being shown to the truth as it is in Jesus, its friends may feel assured that, while in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knows not God, it shall still please God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. While the preaching of Christ and Him crucified, continues to be to adversaries a stumbling-block and foolishness, it shall continue to prove to believers the power of God and the wisdom of God. It is a gladdening fact that the truth as it is in Jesus is being taught in many lands, and is being embraced by greater numbers than ever. Moreover, in connection with the revealed purpose of God, that all nations shall be brought to the feet of Jesus, to be blessed in Him and to call Him blessed, that the earth may be filled with His glory, it is sustaining to think, that the divine provision which the gospel contains, is so perfectly adapted to meet and remove the sins and miseries and sore necessities of the human spirit, that its calls and promises, and the conviction of its heavenly origin, cannot be rooted out of the minds and memories, the consciences and hearts, of the children of men, or fail of securing more and more acceptance, the more diligently and extensively they are taught to mankind.

Further still, this very enmity to Christ is itself a signal testimony to the magnitude of the question of His character and claims. More than that, blessed be God, as a matter of fact, the vanity of all attempts to bury the truth as it is in Jesus under endless loads of misrepresentation continues to prove that its opponents are unable, however determined, to shake the world, or even themselves, free of it. The testimony regarding Christ refuses to be buried. It refuses even to take the place of obscurity or of disrepute which its

adversaries would assign to it. When at any time for a little its enemies fancy that they have consigned it to the grave of oblivion, its speedy resurrection in greater power than ever, startles them, as would a spectre from the regions of the dead. And neither in the counsels of apostate or apostatising ecclesiastics, nor in the senates of nations, nor in halls of literature, science, or philosophy, nor in the meetings of free-thinking masses of men, nor anywhere else on earth, as the most commanding of all inquiries, can the question be avoided, or will it become possible to avoid the question, "What think ye of Christ?" This is a question destined to force itself more and more on the attention of all men upon the face of the earth, on men in every condition and in every place, destined to compel an answer, and destined to place and keep men for time and for eternity under awful responsibility for the answer which they give. For the answer to this question, that is forced from all men, shall decide for good or for evil the fate of Churches, the fate of nations, and the fate of every human being, as indeed it shall also decide the fate of the angels of light and the fate of the spirits of darkness.

Proper conduct towards adversaries.

With reference to the open adversaries of Christ and His gospel who are multiplying on every hand, the following things ought to be carefully kept in view. *First*, The more thoroughly the matter is inquired into *as a matter of fact*, the more clearly will it be seen that their opposition springs from the carnal mind, which is enmity against God; and that in most cases it is fostered by immoral habits. They are not in the condition of men to be pitied more than blamed. They are not pure in their motives or disinterested or candid in their judgments. Learned as well as unlearned scoffers walk after their own lusts, and furnish, in their

vicious passions and habits, the chief causes of their infidelity. And so ordinarily the proper way of dealing with them is to proclaim and exemplify the truth rather than to argue it, remembering that if they are to be brought to a better mind, it will not be by human reasoning the most conclusive, so much as by the divine blessing on simple statements of the truth, and practical exhibitions of its power. *Second*, Even if cases occur of adversaries whose opposition to the truth is *seemingly* owing to *intellectual* rather than to *moral* causes, still insidious pride of heart, or the inward bias to evil which is fostered by circumstances, will be found at the bottom of their enmity; so that what adversaries in *every* case require, is the divine renewal of their moral nature and tastes by the gospel of God's blended righteousness and love, as embodied in the person and work of Christ. *Third*, A fearful responsibility is incurred by professed friends of truth who, under whatever plea, so handle the authority and claims of the Divine Word as to give countenance and confirmation to the scepticism which rejects it altogether. *Fourth*, A not less solemn responsibility is incurred by such as, while contending for the *forms* of gospel truth, discredit their doctrinal orthodoxy by their careless, sinful lives, and so put it in the power of adversaries plausibly to deny any essential superiority in a faith which is thus seen in its professors to yield no better fruit than its opposite. *Fifth*, They only are owned by the Lord Jesus as faithful servants who, while contending for the whole counsel of God, demonstrate the divine origin and power of the gospel by the purity of their life, and can say, "We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen,"¹ and so explain rather than argue, declare rather than prove, and testify rather than debate; and thus probe the slumbering conscience, and offer peace to the troubled

¹ John iii.

heart, rather than attempt, by mere argument, to conquer and to satisfy the proud and perverse intellect.

2. The answer given by *inconsistent and unfaithful* professors of the gospel to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" Of these professors of the gospel there are three distinct classes who respectively answer this question in a characteristic manner.

(1.) There are *careless* professors, who, while bearing the name of Christ, are earthly minded men, and live habitually in a *state of indifference* to His whole character and claims. They have never seriously and sufficiently acquainted themselves with the truth to form any definite ideas of it, and are living contented with the faintest and most fleeting impressions in reference to the whole subject. Any attempt on their part to answer the question, "What think ye of Christ?" would only prove that they have scarcely formed a single correct and definite idea as to His person and work. Some things in His history indeed do probably somewhat impress even them. The extraordinary events connected with His birth; the miracles which He wrought; the piety, purity, and love that breathed in His words and actions; the testimonies given from heaven to Him at His baptism; His conflict with Satan in the wilderness; the glory in which He appeared on the mount of transfiguration; the darkness, and earthquakes, and other supernatural events connected with His death, resurrection, and His ascension into heaven; and the outpouring of His Spirit on the day of Pentecost—these and other facts of the history of Christ will arrest the attention of the most careless professors of the gospel on the character of Christ, and force them to feel a difference between Him and others, even the best but still merely human servants of God. Nevertheless, if put to it, they could give but a sorry account of wherein the difference lies. And even their impressions in His favour are greatly

counteracted by what they have heard or read of the meanness of His human origin, and the poverty of His lot, and the sufferings of His life, and the shame and agony of His crucifixion. So that, on the whole, they regard the earthly history of Christ without much sympathy; and so far at least as they are concerned, they decidedly prefer that such a life should remain peculiar to Himself. Insomuch that, while desirous in their own way to share in any benefits which His shame, and sufferings and death may be supposed to yield, they have no desire for fellowship with Him in the endurance by which these benefits were secured. On the contrary, the only portion which they relish and labour for daily is a portion in the present life. And in their frame of mind, and so long as it continues, nothing can be further from their thoughts or more alien to their feelings than to glory daily in the cross of Christ, as that by which the world is crucified to them and they are crucified to the world. Such careless, carnally minded professors of the gospel are in reality enemies of the cross of Christ, and, continuing so, their end is destruction. Yet even to them, as He looks upon them, turning away from Himself and seeking satisfaction to their souls where they can never find it, Jesus is standing near, and crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."¹ "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, buy wine and milk without money and without price," &c.²

(2.) There are unspiritual professors, who call themselves by the name of Christ, but are nothing more than *orthodox lifeless formalists*. In answer to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" they can show that they have learned, speculatively, a great deal more than the former class about His character and work, and that their religious beliefs are sound and scriptural. They can speak

¹ John vii.

² Isa. lv.

accurately of the divinity of Christ, of His incarnation, of His mediatorial work, and of its benefits. Yet they are not renewed and purified by their faith. The truth is not light and life to them, but a dead letter. They imprison it within them in unrighteousness. Sin has still dominion in and over them. The consequence is, that with their religious views and convictions on the one hand, and their still unsubdued evil inclinations on the other hand, they are tossed about by contradictory influences: they believe the truth and they doubt it, they hold it fast and they let it go, according as their right convictions or their wrong inclinations for the time prevail. Lukewarm at best, having a form of godliness yet denying its power, Christ speaks to them as without His Spirit and none of His, and declares Himself ready to spue them out of His mouth. As the only way by which they may yet experience His love, He calls on them to hear His rebukes, and submit to His chastenings, and be zealous and repent. And to show what marvellous love is in that call, He adds the soul-quickenings words, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on His throne."¹

(3.) A third class of professors have again risen up prominently among us, who are known by the names of *rationalists* and *broad churchmen*. They affect to be men of wider sympathies and of more enlarged views than even the princes of orthodoxy, learning, and godliness, that have, age after age, appeared in our Israel. The men of whom we speak, affect not only juster views of Christian truth, but higher general enlightenment and culture. It is, no doubt,

¹ Rev. iii.

often difficult to know what men of this class really believe about Christ and His work. But numbers of them are great in their speech about the human side of Christ's character, and about the self-sacrifice which marked His life on earth, and about the purpose of His mission and His gospel to redeem us from our selfish, sinful life and tendencies, by calling us to the cultivation and practice of a similarly self-sacrificing spirit. And they tell us that, by meditating on His virtues and imitating them, we are to catch His spirit, and so rise out of our low and self-indulging disposition into conformity to His mind and will, and thus become one with Him in judgment, affection, and conduct, until we reflect His likeness and are meet for His presence.

This is a fine-looking theory, and one very flattering to human capabilities, and well fitted to captivate the hearts of natural men, especially of a young and rising generation. But in reality it is just the old moderatism or deism of the last century showing itself again in our pulpits, and coming back among us in all the more dangerous a form that it wears a smiling, conceited face of affected Christian light and earnestness. For it is a theory that denies by ignoring the true person and work of Jesus, and those necessities of men's condition that require His intervention as a Saviour. It leaves out of account, and so sets aside, the doctrine of man's fallen, guilty, depraved, and perishing condition—the Scripture doctrine of the evil and deceit of sin—the doctrine of the perfection and demands of the law and government of God—the doctrine of a true and proper atonement as needful to satisfy divine justice, and secure the salvation of sinners in consistency with, and to the glory of the divine character and law—the doctrine of the divinity of Christ as that which alone gives worth and efficacy to His atonement—the doctrine of the Holy Ghost as the regenerator and sanctifier, the teacher, guide, and comforter of the redeemed

—and the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, a faith which is always followed by good works, by a holy life, in that it always operates to purify the heart and to overcome the world. The denial of all these grand and vital characteristic doctrines of the gospel, is the logical, and, in fact, sooner or later, the actual, result of the plausible but hollow and deceptive representation of the character and work of Christ, that is so popular with not a few in the present day. It is therefore a theory which robs the Lord Jesus Christ of infinitely the greatest portion of His glory, leaving nothing in Him but a human love to lean upon, and nothing in His gospel but a sight of human virtue for His followers to imbibe and imitate, in order to their own well-being. For teachers and guides of others to set up such a Christ is to deny the Christ of God, and to present to us, not a rock to be our strength, but a covered pitfall to ensnare us to our ruin.

Having alluded to the Bible representations, or, in other words, God's thoughts of Christ—to the opposition given to His character and claims by open enemies—and then to the treatment that He is receiving from different classes of inconsistent professors of His gospel—let us,

3. Consider the answer to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" that is given by His true and faithful followers. Their reply to the question is very much an echo of God's own revealed thoughts of Him. There is a blessed multitude, daily increasing, who have received the truth as it is in Jesus in the love of it. Ask them, "What think ye of Christ?" and their answer, their ready, full-hearted, grateful, joyous answer is, "My Lord and my God; all my salvation, and all my desire; my light and life; my righteousness and strength; my all in all; my maker and my husband; my Redeemer, and the Holy One of Israel; fairer than the sons of men, the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. He is the

Son of the living God, by whom all things were created, and are upheld; the Ruler and Lord of all. He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. His name is the only name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. His name shall endure for ever; it shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be His glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and amen. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want: He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Him, having not seen, we love; in Him, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord. . . . I count them but

ding that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do; forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”¹

Of all these faithful followers of the Lamb on earth, the daily song is, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.” Unable, as they feel themselves to be while on earth, duly to magnify the Lord Jesus, they rejoice in the thought of the loftier adorations and thanksgivings that are being constantly offered to Him by the redeemed in heaven. “Thou art worthy, . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” They rejoice in the tributes of homage and of praise unceasingly rendered by the myriads of angels that stand

¹ Phil. iii.

around the throne and around the redeemed, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And it is still further gladdening to believers to remember and realise the fact, that every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, are to be heard, saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."¹

To those who know Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, He is thus All in All, the alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last of all their thoughts and desires, of all their aims and actions, of all their longings and labours; of the life which they lead on earth, and of the unending life which they are looking and preparing for beyond the skies.

¹ Rev. iii.

II.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY—ITS PRACTICAL BEARING ON REDEMPTION BY CHRIST.

“ In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”
MATT. xxviii. 19.

MANKIND, not liking to retain God in their knowledge, have been given over to a reprobate mind, to the service of abominable idols, and the practice of vile affections.¹ Multitudes, even with a Christian name, live in unrighteousness and sin, because they have not the knowledge of God. To such, on the other hand, as have the knowledge of God, grace and peace are multiplied: they are called to a life of virtue here, and to a life of everlasting glory hereafter.² But it is only when God gives any a heart to know Him that they become His people and He becomes their God.³ And when the earth is filled with this knowledge of the Lord, it shall be full of truth and righteousness, of peace and love, and of adoring praise.

The duty laid on all who are entering on the work of their life on earth, is to know the God of their fathers, and to serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.⁴ The duty laid on His children and servants is to increase in the knowledge of God, that they may be increasingly fruitful in every good work.⁵

None indeed can thoroughly find out God; none can find Him out unto perfection. Parts of His ways are made known, and may be seen and apprehended as shown in His

¹ Rom. i.

³ Jer. xxiv.

⁵ Col. i.

² 2 Pet. i.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxix.

works of creation and providence; but nothing beyond a little portion is heard of Him. The thunder of His power none can understand: nor can any understand the number of His years. He doeth great things which we cannot comprehend. His greatness is unsearchable. His thoughts are an unfathomable depth. His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known.

And yet the life of our souls now, and our entrance into eternal life at last, depend on our really knowing God and His Son Jesus Christ. As regards all who have fellowship with Him on earth, and are preparing for His presence in heaven, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

I. The *oneness of God* is plainly revealed to us. "There is none other God but one." "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."¹ "The Lord, He is God: there is none else."² "Besides me there is no God; I know not any."³ He is "the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God."⁴ "Thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth."⁵ There is thus only one Being in the universe who is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. He alone has existed eternally in and of Himself. There is no God before Him, with Him, or after Him. There is no being to be likened to Him or compared with Him. He who knoweth all things, and filleth eternity and immensity with His presence, knows not any being that is entitled to share with Himself the honours of divinity.

The oneness of God thus taught in Scripture, is also proclaimed in the works of creation and providence. The

¹ Deut. vi.

² Deut. iv.

³ Isa. xliv.

⁴ 1 Tim. i.

⁵ Ps. lxxxiii.

harmony that is seen to prevail among them all, evidences that they proceed from one great Creator, and are governed by Him as their only supreme Ruler. The unity of design which they display, proves them to have been all planned by the same infinite Mind, to have sprung from one universal Parent, to be pervaded, preserved, and disposed of by one God. And it may here be added, that so far as our reason is capable of judging, and so far as it is rightly exercised on this subject, its conclusion also is, that there is but one only, the living and the true God.

According, then, to the declarations of Scripture, the indications in the universe, and the dictates of reason, there is at the head of creation one infinitely perfect Being, from whom all creatures receive their existence; on whom, as their Preserver, they unceasingly depend; to whom, as their Ruler and Judge, they are continually subject; by whom a divine supremacy is exercised from His throne of universal dominion over all His works; between whom and the highest of His creatures there is an impassable distance, and before whom they continually prostrate themselves in adoration of His unsearchable greatness, awful majesty, and holiness, and offer up their praises for His goodness, which endureth for ever.

II. The Scriptures as plainly reveal that this one living and true God exists *in Three Persons*, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Thus—

1. The Father is God. “To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things.”¹ “There is but one God, the Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”² “Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?”³ “One is your Father, who is in heaven.”⁴ He is the “holy Father,”⁵ “the righteous

¹ Rom. ix.

³ Mal. ii.

⁵ John xvii.

² Eph. iv.

⁴ Matt. xxiii.

Father,"¹ "the Father of mercies,"² "the Father of lights with whom is no variableness, neither the least shadow of turning."³

2. The Son is God.

(1.) The names of God are given to Him: "The Word was GOD;"⁴ "GOD blessed for ever;"⁵ "He is the *true* GOD,"⁶ "the *great* GOD,"⁷ "the *mighty* GOD,"⁸ "the GOD of Israel,"⁹ "JEHOVAH on His throne, high and lifted up."¹⁰

(2.) The perfections that belong to God alone are ascribed to the Son. He is "the *first* and the *last*," that is, the *Eternal*,¹¹ "set up *from everlasting*,"¹² "whose goings forth have been of old *from everlasting*."¹³ He is *omnipotent*: "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, who was, and is, and is to come, the *Almighty*,"¹⁴ "to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth."¹⁵ He is *omniscient*: "He searcheth the reins and the heart."¹⁶ He is *omnipresent*: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;"¹⁷ "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."¹⁸ And He is *immutable*: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."¹⁹

(3.) The works of God are all performed by the Son. He is the *Creator*, "All things were made by Him."²⁰ He is the *Preserver*, "By Him all things consist."²¹ He is the *Governor*, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;"²² "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, . . . and every tongue . . . confess that he is Lord."²³

¹ John xvii.

² 2 Cor. i.

³ Jas. i.

⁴ John i.

⁵ Rom. ix.

⁶ 1 John v.

⁷ Tit. ii.

⁸ Isa. ix.

⁹ Comp. Exod. xxiv. 10; Ps. lxxviii.

¹⁰ Comp. Isa. vi.; John xii.

¹¹ Rev. i.

¹² Prov. viii.

¹³ Mic. v.

¹⁴ Rev. i.

¹⁵ Matt. xxviii.

¹⁶ Rev. i. 18; Eph. iv. 8.

¹⁷ John xii.

¹⁸ Rev. ii.

¹⁹ Matt. xviii.

²⁰ Matt. xxviii.

²¹ Heb. xiii.

²² John i.

²³ Col. i.

²⁴ Ps. xlv.; Heb. i.

²⁵ Phil. ii.

(4.) The worship belonging to God only, is due, and given to the Son. "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as the Father;"¹ "When God bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him;"² "And every creature which is in heaven, and in the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."³

3. The Holy Ghost is God. To lie to Him is to lie unto God.⁴ When the Holy Ghost spake by David,⁵ it was God who spake by him.⁶ The Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of holiness;"⁷ "the Eternal Spirit;"⁸ the omnipresent Spirit, from whom we cannot flee;⁹ the omniscient Spirit, who "searcheth all things;"¹⁰ "the Spirit of grace;"¹¹ "the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth;"¹² "the Spirit of glory;"¹³ "the good Spirit;"¹⁴ "the Spirit of power;"¹⁵ the Spirit who "moved on the face of the waters."¹⁶ He "garnished the heavens;"¹⁷ He "revealed the truth to holy prophets and apostles;"¹⁸ He gave the power to work miracles;¹⁹ He inspired the sacred writers;²⁰ He strives with men; He testifies of Christ; He quickens the spiritually dead; He guides into all truth; He helps the infirmities of true suppliants; He makes intercession within them, with groanings that cannot be uttered; He dwells in them as His temples; He makes them fruitful in all gracious affections and habits. Such as resist and quench Him, grieve and provoke Him till He ceases to strive with them. Such as cherish Him are guided by Him to the land of uprightness.

¹ John v.⁶ Acts iv.¹¹ Heb. x.¹⁶ Gen. i.² Heb. i.⁷ Rom. i.¹² John xiv.¹⁷ Job xxvi.³ Rev. v.⁸ Heb. ix.¹³ 1 Pet. iv.¹⁸ Eph. iii.⁴ Acts v.⁹ Ps. cxxxix.¹⁴ Neh. ix.¹⁹ Rom. xv. 19.⁵ Acts i.¹⁰ 1 Cor. ii.¹⁵ Rom. xv.²⁰ 2 Pet. i.

The Holy Spirit, of whom all this is true, is equally with the Father and the Son a divine person.

4. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons of the Godhead. They are not one divine person under different names or different manifestations; they are distinguished from each other by their respectively personal properties within the Godhead. Thus it is the property of the Father to beget the Son; it is the property of the Son to be begotten of the Father; and it is the property of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of the Son as well as of the Father, eternally to proceed from both. And in relation to the created universe, they are also distinguished from each other by their severally appropriate and characteristic actings; for it is characteristic of the Father that He sends the Son to save sinners; it is characteristic of the Son that He comes into the world, takes our nature, and works out our redemption; and it is characteristic of the Spirit that, being sent by Christ, He applies redemption to the soul.

5. While distinct persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God. They are one in nature and in essence. They are the same in substance, equal in power and glory. They are not three Gods, but the one living and true God. The Father is the one God, the beginning and the end and the Lord of all things; the Son is the one God, the beginning and the end and the Lord of all things; and the Holy Spirit is the one God, the beginning and the end and the Lord of all things. To us there is but this one God, one God in three persons, three persons in one God,—the Triune Jehovah.

This is the God of the Bible, the God of all true Christians. Of this truth the following are a few of the proofs and illustrations furnished by Scripture:—

In the Book of Isaiah occur the words, “Come ye near

unto ME and hear ye this ; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning ; from the time that it was, there AM I : and the LORD GOD and HIS SPIRIT hath sent ME.”¹ “ Seek out of the book of the LORD and read ; for MY mouth and HIS SPIRIT it hath gathered them.”²

There is the threefold form of blessing of the ancient Church : “ The Lord bless thee, and keep thee ; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee ; the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”³

There is the thrice-repeated ascription to God of the holiness displayed in the work of redemption : “ Holy, holy, holy is the LORD OF HOSTS ; the whole earth is full of His glory.”⁴ In this ascription of praise all admit that the *Father* is addressed and adored. But so is the *Son* ; for John in his Gospel⁵ expressly says that the glory seen by the prophet on this occasion was the *glory of CHRIST*. And the Holy Spirit was also concerned in this adoration ; for in Acts xxviii. it is said of the words divinely spoken in connection with the vision, “ Well spake the HOLY GHOST by Esaias,” &c.

Still more plainly do the New Testament Scriptures direct our faith to the three-one God. Thus, *First*, there is the form of Christian baptism ; “ Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”⁶ *Second*, There is the record of Christ’s own baptism, when they saw the SPIRIT OF GOD descending like a dove, and lighting upon HIM : “ And lo ! a voice from heaven, saying, This is MY beloved SON, in whom I am well pleased.”⁷ *Third*, There is the form of prayer used by the Apostle to conclude his Epistle : “ The grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the com-

¹ Isa. xlvi.³ Num. vi.⁵ John xii.⁷ Matt. iii.² Isa. xxxiv.⁴ Isa. vi.⁶ Matt. xxviii.

munion of the HOLY GHOST be with you all, Amen.”¹ *Fourth*, There are the words of Jesus : “ The SPIRIT of Truth, which proceedeth from THE FATHER, HE (that is, the Spirit) shall testify of ME.”² *Fifth*, There is the prayer for the Thessalonians : “ *The Lord* (*i.e.*, the Spirit) direct our hearts into the love of GOD (*i.e.*, of God the Father), and into the patient waiting for CHRIST.”³ *Sixth*, There are the words of the Apostle to the Ephesians : “ For through HIM we have access by one SPIRIT unto the FATHER.”⁴ *Seventh*, And there is the prayer of John for the Churches : “ Grace be unto you, from HIM WHO IS, and WHO WAS, and WHO IS TO COME ; and from the SEVEN SPIRITS (*i.e.*, the Holy Spirit, in the fulness of his perfections and grace), and from JESUS CHRIST, who is the faithful witness.”⁵

III. This doctrine of the Trinity being revealed in Scripture, *human reason* can discern its *suitableness*, or even its *necessity* to the *absolute perfection* and *blessedness* of God. For God is the source of all the excellence and all the happiness of His creatures ; and His Word and our own reason lead us to suppose, that whatever is good in His intelligent creatures will be found to reflect a corresponding infinite goodness in Himself ; that the characteristics of the divine nature will be reflected in those characteristics of His intelligent offspring in which their virtue and happiness are found.

Now the virtue and happiness of intelligent creatures greatly depend on two things : first, the way in which they stamp their virtues on each other ; and, second, the sympathy, communion, and fellowship which they have with each other in the love and practice of virtue. If, being created, they were isolated from and kept in ignorance of each other, and

¹ 2 Cor. xiii.² John xv.³ 2 Thess. iii.⁴ Eph. ii.⁵ Rev. i.

required each to live in a state of absolute solitude, the greater number of their virtues would have no existence, and their happiness would be utterly marred. In a condition of entire separation from all creatures of the same nature and species, even the presence of God and the fellowship of creatures of a different order would probably fail, in any adequate manner, to call forth their virtues or secure their happiness. It is in fellowship with others of his own kind, that any intelligent creature has his piety and virtue called forth, and his blessedness secured. And so it commends itself to our highest reason, when revealed, that the great God, who made man in His own image, instead of living throughout the past eternity what would seem to us the cheerless life of a solitary person, has ever existed, self-exists, in a plurality of persons, who have ever enjoyed inexpressibly and inconceivably perfect and blessed communion with each other, in the absolute unity of the divine nature and essence, as the three-one God.

Contemplate the Father eternally saying to the second person of the Trinity, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee." Contemplate the Son as eternally "in the bosom of the Father." Contemplate the Father and the Son as eternally delighting in those perfections, of which the Father is the natural fountain, and the Son the uncreated inheritor. Realise in any measure this combined oneness and distinctness of the Father and the Son, and a view of Deity is obtained, infinitely more worthy of the all-perfect and blessed God, than can be in the minds of those who consider Him to be as strictly one in personality as in Godhead.

But it adds to the inexpressibly blessed and glorious character of the Deity, to know that, besides the co-existence of the Father and the Son, there is a third person in the Godhead—the Holy Ghost—who is the co-equal and co-

eternal partaker of the same uncreated and infinite perfections. For by this fact there is secured a joint contemplation and enjoyment of the divine perfections as exhibited by each person in the Godhead to the others. In other words, the Son and the Holy Spirit jointly contemplate and enjoy the perfection of the Father; the Father and the Holy Spirit jointly contemplate and enjoy the perfections of the Son; and the Father and the Son jointly contemplate and enjoy the perfections of the Holy Spirit.

This revelation of the relations and communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost within the Godhead presents to us the Deity as indeed all light, and life, and love, and blessedness, and glory. God is thus all "*light*:" light which is in the Father as its source, and in the Son as "the brightness of the Father's glory," and in both, perfectly and infinitely co-existent. God is thus all "*life*:" life which is in the Father as its fountain-head, and in the Son in virtue of His eternal generation from the Father, and in the Holy Spirit in virtue of His eternal procession from the Father and from the Son, and in each in the same uncreated and everlasting fulness. God is thus all "*love*:" love which finds in each of the three persons of the Godhead infinite occasion for its exercise, and its satisfaction, from everlasting to everlasting. God is thus all "*blessedness*:" a blessedness of which the perfections of each of the persons of the Godhead, and their mutual relations and fellowship within the divine nature, are the ever-existing boundless source. And God is thus all "*glory*" too, as the glory of the Father rests on the Son, and is reflected back upon the Father, while the same glory is the glory of the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as He is one with the Father and with the Son in the infinite perfections and everlasting counsels of the Godhead, and is also ever prepared to exhibit these perfections, and execute these counsels in the works of the divine hand,

and to secure from the created universe the glory due to the Eternal.

If any object to this doctrine of the existence of God in three persons, that it is incomprehensible, they may on the same ground object to belief in an uncreated, an eternal, and a self-existing Being altogether. For certainly there is nothing in the fact and manner of existence of a three-one God, that is more incomprehensible, than in the fact of the divine existence at all. If we take in the doctrine of the existence of a self-existing, infinitely perfect, everlasting, personal God—and only the fool (who is all the greater a fool if a philosophical one) denies this—instead of its being more difficult to realise such a Being as existing in three persons, than as existing in one person only, the very nature which God has imparted to us as rational and moral creatures, made in His own image, leads us to the conclusion that the *fellowship* of created intelligences, which is so essential to their nature, their constitution, their well-being, has its infinitely perfect ideal in the existence and fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as the one living and true God.

IV. The doctrine of the three-one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is an *eminently practical doctrine*.

1. This is proved by the fact that it is revealed to us only in connection with, and as essential to, the plan of redemption set forth in the gospel. It is not for us to decide to what extent this doctrine might or might not have been made known, apart from the scheme of salvation. Enough for us to know that it is in and by means of that scheme of grace that the subsistence of God in three persons comes to light, comes clearly out to view, and that this doctrine of the Trinity enters into the heart and substance of the provision made for the redemption of sinners

by Jesus Christ. For GOD the FATHER is revealed as having possessed Christ, under the name of Wisdom, in the beginning of His way, before His works of old; as having set Him up from everlasting in order to the redemption of sinners; as having chosen them in Him before the foundation of the world; as having eternally had it as the good pleasure of His will that in due time Christ should make His soul an offering for sin, and thus see a seed—see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and accomplish the Father's pleasure in the actual salvation of those for whom he died; and on these accounts delighting in Him for ever and ever, and so loving Him as to have given all things into His hands. GOD the SON is revealed as one brought up with the Father, as in constant counsel and communion with Him anent the purposes and plans of divine sovereignty, wisdom, righteousness, and grace; especially anent the plan of redeeming love; as thus rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and having His delights with the sons of men; as (when other sacrifices for sin were unavailing) causing His voice to be heard, saying, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, the law is within my heart." And not less distinctly does GOD the HOLY GHOST stand forth to view, as fitting the human nature of Christ, when taken into union with His divine, for the work to be finished by Him, and as now carrying out this finished work to all its blessed results, in its application to the souls of men, for their actual and eternal salvation. The whole character and efficacy of the plan and work of redemption are thus bound up with the doctrine of the three-one God, and with the parts which are severally performed by the distinct persons of the Godhead, in the determining, arranging, and actual accomplishment of that work; the Father planning it, the Son executing it; and the Holy Spirit carrying it into effect in the souls

of men. These considerations show that there is no doctrine of greater practical importance in the whole Word of God. For with such a provision, and with such pledges on the part of the Triune Jehovah to secure from first to last the salvation of men, there cannot possibly be a failure at any point, in the history of the accomplishment of this work, even until the keystone of the whole building is brought forth with shoutings of Grace! grace! unto it. On the other hand, if God were such a Being as Deists and Unitarians represent Him, a scheme of redemption such as the gospel reveals were impossible. The claims of divine justice and the commandments of a perfect law could not be reconciled with the salvation of sinners. And either evil must be permitted to dwell with God, or those who commit it must be consigned to hopeless misery or to absolute annihilation.

2. The practical importance of this doctrine is seen in the fact that the first public profession of Christianity, which separates a man from the world and introduces him into the Church of Christ, is a profession of faith in the three-one God, or the God of salvation. The beginning, the first act of a public profession of Christianity, is receiving the initiatory rite of baptism. By the reception of that rite, all to whom it is warrantably administered, are formally separated from the world, and recognised as members of the Church of Christ. They stand forth as sinners saved in Christ—saved from the devil, the world, and the flesh—and dedicating their present and their whole future being to the service of God. The water in baptism symbolises the sin-cleansing virtue of Jesus's blood, the heart-purifying power of the Holy Spirit. And the reception of the ordinance involves a solemn engagement to glorify God with soul, body, and spirit, which are His. This solemnly significant and eventful act is performed in the name of the *Father*, the

Son, and the *Holy Ghost*; and that fact is full of meaning and of instruction of the most practical nature and of the highest importance. For it implies that baptism is administered under such conditions as the following:—*First*, As an ordinance appointed by the three-one God, to represent participation of the redemption of the gospel. *Second*, As an ordinance in observing which the blessing of the three-one God is supplicated and expected on those who receive it. *Third*, As an ordinance in which the participators avow their faith in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as the one living and true God. *Fourth*, As an ordinance in which the participators renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and yield themselves up, soul, body, and spirit, to God, as thus revealed and believed in, to do His will, and to seek their happiness in His favour. *Fifth*, As an ordinance in which we dedicate ourselves to the three-one God; to GOD THE FATHER, the Father of the Eternal Son, the Father of all creatures, whom He made and keeps in being; the reconciled and gracious Father of all who are in Christ by faith; to GOD THE SON, the Eternal Son, the Son of God incarnate, who in our nature lived and died on earth, and now pleads and reigns in heaven, for the salvation of all given to Him in covenant by the Father; and to GOD THE HOLY GHOST, as entering, inhabiting, and working in all the saved, applying redemption to their souls, enlightening, purifying, and gladdening them, and so preparing them for, and leading them to, the land of uprightness.

3. The practical nature and importance of the doctrine of the Trinity is seen in the blessing prayed for by the Apostle to the Churches; prayed for, ever since, by all Christian assemblies for eighteen hundred years, and which every rightly exercised Christian feels that he needs to be continually supplicating at the throne of grace, and always realising, as the very life and well-being of his soul: "The

grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen.”¹

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” includes all that He can become to His people, and do for them, as their Redeemer. It includes His infinite fulness as He who filleth all in all. When He manifests Himself exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give to His people repentance and forgiveness of sins; when He scatters their darkness and makes them to walk in the light; when He becomes to them the foundation on which they are enabled to build their hopes; when they live by Christ living in them; when they find Him delivering them out of the hand of all their enemies, and making them more than conquerors, His grace is with them; “it is made sufficient for them, and His strength is made perfect in their weakness.” Now this fellowship with Christ, this communication of all the power and all the help which His followers, in all ages, and in all parts of the earth, require at His hands, would be simply impossible—it would even be idolatry and blasphemy to expect it from Christ—if He were not a divine person, God the Son, and so the all-sufficient Saviour. And all this is included in the prayer which Christians of all generations, in all parts of the earth, are, in all conditions and at all times, to offer, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

The next part of this prayer is, “The love of God be with you.” This love of God is the love in the exercise of which the Father eternally chose sinners to salvation. In the exercise of this love He laid help for sinners on His own Son, as one mighty to save. In the fulness of time He sent Him into the world, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might

¹ 2 Cor. xiii.

receive the adoption of sons. In the exercise of this love He spared not even His own Son, but gave Him up to die for our offences, and then raised Him for our justification. In and by the living and reigning Redeemer, the love of the Father to believers secures their pardon, acceptance, and holiness, and grants to them a place in His own family, and animates them with the spirit of adoption, and invests them with all the privileges, dignities, and blessedness of the children of God for ever. And the love that does all this for all believers, is supplicated in the prayer, "The love of God be with you."

Then the prayer is added, "The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you." The Lord Jesus, having finished on earth the work given to Him by His Father to accomplish, and having left the world and ascended to His Father, the Holy Spirit being sent down according to His promise, came to be, as He now is, in all the redeemed, their sanctifier and comforter, in all ages, till the Lord returns to judgment. And now all the gifts and graces of true believers are bestowed by Him. He teaches them all things, and brings all things to their remembrance. He glorifies Christ by taking the things that are His, and showing them to such as believe. He sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts. He prompts all their holy desires and heavenly longings. He fills them with peace and joy in believing, and makes them, by the working of His power within them, to abound in hope. They are warned not to resist, grieve, and quench Him, but rather to cherish His presence and motions, to preserve their very bodies as His temples, to live and walk in Him, and to bear His fruits, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. If it is the duty of believers to receive such communications of the Spirit, and, in their character and history, to exemplify the enlightening, purifying, and gladdening

effects of His inworking power, all this proves that they are habitually to realise the divine personality of the Holy Ghost, and the divine nature of His gracious dealings with their souls, in the habitual utterance of the prayer, "The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you."

Conclusion.

First, These considerations show that a true understanding, a believing reception, a cherished remembrance, a prayerful improvement, and a happy experience of the respective parts performed in our salvation by the three persons in the Godhead, are essential, all-important requisites of all true godliness and of all christian virtue. Without dwelling on other evidences that might be adduced to the same purpose, we shall only add, that so far as concerns the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on this earth, when at length Christ possesses the glory and dominion ascribed and prayed for to Him, as the result and reward of His having loved His people, and washed them from their sins in His blood, and made them kings and priests unto God and His Father, this kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost shall owe its consummation to the bestowment of the blessings supplicated from the three-one God—to "grace and peace from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth."¹ And indisputably the same Triune Jehovah shall be adored in the ascriptions for ever made by the redeemed in heaven of "salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."²

¹ Rev. i.

² Rev. vii.

Second, Do not fancy you can safely shelter yourselves from your duty to the three-one God by the *mystery* of His being. *Mystery!* What is not full of mystery? The bread you eat is full of mysteries; yet you eat and live by it. The water you drink is full of mysteries; yet you refresh and purify your frames by it. The air you breathe is full of mysteries; but you do not the less use it as a means of life. The shining light is full of mysteries; but you do not on that account refuse its guiding and enlivening beams. The heavens over your heads are full of mysteries; but you do not therefore the less ascertain, as far as possible, the laws that govern them, for your own instruction and guidance. The earth on which you tread is full of mysteries; but you do not therefore the less pry into its ascertainable secrets, because there may be myriads that are impenetrable. The future is for you, and for all, full of mystery; but are you on that account to shut eternity, heaven, and hell from your thoughts? Your present life is full of mystery; but are you therefore daily to spend it in utter forgetfulness of the warning that it will profit a man nothing if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? All things are full of mystery; but they are also more or less filled with revealed facts and realities; and it were madness not to make use of these facts and realities because of so much in all things that is beyond your ken. So, as regards the mysteries of the divine nature and workings, enough is revealed to awe, instruct, enlighten, renew, control, and bless for ever, the simplest souls that are willing to receive the truth. If you are to live before Him, and to live for ever with Him, you must now know Him as He is revealed and related to all who believe in and experience the redemption of the gospel. In that case, God the Father is your reconciled and gracious God and Father in Christ Jesus; God the Son, as incarnate, is your God and Redeemer; and God

the Holy Ghost is your indwelling Sanctifier. "Know thou then the God of thy fathers, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, he will cast thee off for ever."¹

¹ 1 Chron. xxviii.

III.

THE RELATIONS OF CHRIST WITHIN THE GODHEAD.

“In the beginning was THE WORD, and THE WORD was *with God*, and THE WORD *was God*. The same was in *the beginning* with God.”—JOHN i. 1. “The ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, who is in *the bosom of the Father*.”—JOHN i. 18. “My BELOVED SON.”—MATT. iii. 17. “His DEAR SON.”—COL. i. 13. “The BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY and the EXPRESS IMAGE OF HIS PERSON.”—HEB. i. 3. “The IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD.”—COL. i. 15. “In THE FORM OF GOD.”—PHIL. ii. 6.

THE revelations in Holy Scripture concerning the divinity of Christ, and concerning His relations to the Father and the Holy Ghost within the Godhead, are of the deepest importance; for with His personal character and position, as the second person of the Triune Jehovah, are bound up God’s perfection and blessedness; the execution of the divine purposes is committed to the Son; the works of creation and providence are His works; and the whole scheme of redemption is given into His hands. From the beginning of time the government of the world and of the Church was carried on by Him for four thousand years, to prepare for His advent. By His incarnation in the fulness of time, by His personal ministry on earth, and His obedience unto death, by His rising again, and His exaltation to the right hand of the Father, He has secured the present and eternal salvation of all the redeemed. As Head of the Church, and Head over all things for the Church’s sake, He has, and wields, all power in heaven and on earth. Every blessing, as such, comes through the channel of His blood. The proper motive to every duty, and the power to perform it, are found in His grace. Every saint is in His keeping; every sinner is under His absolute control. The fate of

nations hangs on His breath. The Churches that are faithless perish in His anger. His true kingdom shall advance until it fills the earth. The great day shall find Him on the judgment-seat, with the whole human race on either side of Him, receiving their sentence of welcome or of woe. Angels adore Him as the determiner of their destiny, and devils feel His resistless power, and are finally shut up by Him in darkness and fire. And the absolute eternity that follows all His previous dispensations shall be filled with the services and songs of the unfallen and the ransomed myriads that worship at His feet. If such are the relations of Christ to the created universe, as the Maker of all things and the Redeemer of ransomed men, in order to see aright the foundation of all these relationships, it is to the last degree important to ascertain, understand, and hold fast the doctrine of Scripture concerning His divine nature and His place within the Godhead.

As regards the divinity of Christ, the Scriptures bear testimony to two things: *first*, they furnish clear and conclusive evidence that He is a divine person; and, *second*, they indicate by the titles and terms applied to Him the relations in which He eternally is to the other persons of the Godhead, the Father and the Holy Spirit.

As to the first of these topics, the Scripture evidence that He is a divine person, the direct proofs are such as these:—THE NAMES OF GOD ARE GIVEN TO HIM. He is called “*God* ;” “*God blessed for ever* ;” the *true God* ; the *great God* ; “*the mighty God* ;” “*Jehovah on His throne high and lifted up*.”¹ THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD ARE ASCRIBED TO HIM. He is “*the first and the last* ;”² *Almighty* ;³ *Omniscient* ;⁴ *Omnipresent* ;⁵ *immutable*.⁶ THE WORKS OF GOD ARE

¹ Rom. ix. ; 1 John v. ; Tit. ii. ; Isa. ix. ; Isa. vi. Comp. John xii.

² Rev. i.

⁴ Rev. ii.

⁵ Matt. xviii.

⁶ Heb. xiii.

³ Rev. i.

PERFORMED BY HIM. He is the *Creator*, the *Preserver*, and the *Governor* of the *universe*.¹ And the WORSHIP BELONGING TO GOD ONLY BELONGS TO CHRIST, AND IS GIVEN TO HIM: "All men should honour the Son, even as the Father;"² "Let all the angels of God worship Him;"³ "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."⁴

At present, let us confine our attention to the other topic I have mentioned as set forth in Scripture, viz., the eternal relations of Christ within the divine nature—His relations to the Father and the Holy Ghost. There are various *titles* and *terms* applied to Christ in the Bible, which, while implying His divinity, describe so far His relations to the Father and the Holy Spirit within the Godhead.

I. He is "THE WORD."

1. The *meaning* of this statement. The words of men are the expressions of their thoughts, and Christ, as THE WORD, is the expression of the entire nature of God. And so, as THE WORD, He is *eternal* and *self-existing*: "In the beginning was THE WORD."⁵ When creation began, He already was; He was not created; He was *in* the beginning, and therefore had no beginning; He existed eternally. He is the self-existing One. THE WORD and God *co-exist*: "The WORD was *with* God." They exist together; the WORD eternally shared with God the divine nature. THE WORD is essentially and personally *divine*: "He was God." He is the same in substance with the Father, and equal in power and glory. THE WORD is eternally *distinct* from God; that is, from God the Father, as well as from God the Holy Spirit: "The same was in the beginning *with* God." He has a *personal* subsistence in the

¹ John i. ; Col. i. ; Heb. i.

² John v.

³ Heb. i.

⁴ Rev. v.

⁵ John i.

Godhead, distinct from the personal subsistence of the other persons in it: He and the Father and the Holy Ghost are three distinct persons in the one God.

2. The *practical importance* of the statement. The Bible sets forth this view of Christ as full of instruction, warning, and encouragement.

As "*the WORD of God,*" Christ reveals the invisible Deity in the works of creation: "All things were made by Him" (that is, by Christ as the WORD), "and without Him was not anything made that was made."¹

In the same character of the WORD, Christ, as the Redeemer, is the life and light of men. To be the Redeemer, "the *Word* was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."² The inspired writings are His *written word*, which, as accompanied by His own divine presence and power, Christ, as the *personal WORD*, renders profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. That written word is thus made by Him quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and proving a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart; until, under its power, under His power, put forth in it and by it, the spiritually dead are quickened and made alive, the proud are humbled, the hardest hearts are softened, the most self-deceived have their own character and condition revealed before their eyes, and fall down before Him and acknowledge that as the *personal WORD* He is in His written word, of a truth.

Not only in the salvation of those who thus receive Him, but in the overthrow of all who reject Him, Christ acts as the resistless WORD. John saw Him in vision, on a white

¹ John i.

² John i.

horse, as the faithful and true, judging and making war in righteousness, with eyes as a flame of fire, and many crowns upon His head, and a vesture dipped in blood, followed by the armies of heaven, and with the sharp two-edged sword of His written revelations going out of His mouth, that with it He may smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron, and tread them in the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And in this still pending conflict, in which the enemies of His kingdom shall look so formidable because of their numbers, rank, resources, and power, and because of the earthly wisdom, the superstition, the spiritual delusions, the craft and the malignity, that are combined against Him, the name by which He is called and known in the army of the faithful who follow Him is that of "THE WORD OF GOD." In that name He shall by His crushing victories justify the additional name that is seen written on His vesture and thigh, "King of kings, and Lord of lords."¹

II. The divinity of Christ and His relations within the Godhead are set forth in His title of the SON of God, and in the characteristics of His Sonship as the *only-begotten Son*; the *only-begotten Son*, who *is in the bosom* of the Father; His "*beloved Son*;" and His "*dear Son*."

1. He is "the SON of God," and the most impressive manifestations and evidences of His divine perfections and glory are associated with His name as the Son of God. (1.) John wrote His Gospel "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing, ye *might have life* through His name."² (2.) The Jews declared, and Jesus never denied, that in calling God His Father He made Himself equal with God.³ (3.) As the Son, He is one *in*

¹ Rev. xix.

² John xx.

³ John v.

nature and in *mutual in-being* with the Father: "The Father is *in* the Son, and the Son is *in* the Father, and they are one."¹ (4.) Being the Son, Christ is "the *true God* and *eternal life*."² (5.) As the Son, He is *unsearchable*: "No man knoweth who the Son is but the Father."³ (6.) As the Son, He has *perfect knowledge* of the Father: "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father."⁴ (7.) The Father and the Son are *one in working*: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work; what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."⁵ (8.) The Father *loveth* the Son with an altogether *peculiar love*, with a love with which His love to His creatures cannot be compared: "Thou lovedst me *before* the foundation of the world;"⁶ He is "*in the bosom* of the Father;"⁷ "The Father *showeth Him* all things that He Himself doeth;"⁸ "The Father loveth the Son, and hath *given all things* into His hands."⁹ (9.) The *gift* which God has made of His Son infinitely *exceeds* all other possible gifts; and no other love, even in God, is to be compared with that which this gift displays: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son," &c.;¹⁰ "He that spared not His own Son, . . . how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"¹¹ (10.) The *divine glory* was *manifested* in special *connection* with the *Sonship* when His glory was beheld as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father,¹² and when "from the excellent glory on the mount" of transfiguration the Father's voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son."¹³ (11.) To Christ as the Son of God belongs *life-giving power*: "As the Father quickeneth the dead, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will."¹⁴ (12.) To Him, as the Son of God, belongs

¹ John x.² 1 John v.³ Luke x.⁴ John x.⁵ John v.⁶ John xvii.⁷ John i.⁸ John xvii.⁹ John iii.¹⁰ John iii.¹¹ Rom. viii.¹² John i.¹³ 2 Pet. i.¹⁴ John v.

the *knowledge of things* that are *seen by no mortal eye*: “When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. . . . Thou art the Son of God.”¹ (13.) As the Son of God, He *sends the Spirit*: “He who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost . . . is the Son of God.”² (14.) By Christ, as the Son of God, alone are men made to *know the Father*: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him;”³ “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”⁴ In short, (15.) to confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God is the sum of all duty and the source of all blessedness: “This is His commandment” (as if there were no other, or rather because it includes all others), “This is His commandment, that ye believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ;”⁵ “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God;”⁶ “He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God overcometh the world;”⁷ “This is the record that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son;” “He that hath the Son hath life;”⁸ “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”⁹

Thus every *divine prerogative* and *work* of the Redeemer are so bound up with His SONSHIP as to show that it had a far higher origin than His incarnation; that He was the Son of God *before* the world was made, or time began, or any creature existed; that His Sonship belongs to Him eternally, to His nature and subsistence as the second person in the Godhead, as the uncreated God; that, in short, it is a divine, eternal Sonship.

2. This view of Christ’s Sonship is confirmed by the *terms* employed in Scripture to characterise Him as the Son of God. For—

¹ John i.⁴ John xiv.⁶ 1 John iv.⁸ 1 John v.² John i.⁵ 1 John iii.⁷ 1 John v.⁹ John viii.³ John i.

First, He is "the *only-begotten*" Son of God.¹ Not because God's *immediate power* formed His human body in His virgin mother, for *similar acts of power* formed Adam's body from the dust of the earth, and Eve's out of a rib taken from Adam's side, and have indeed called all creatures into being; and, besides, in reference to the body which Christ thus received, He is called "the Son of man," from which fact the proper inference is that it is rather with reference to the fact and the manner of the *divine nature* eternally flowing to Him from the Father, and within the Godhead, that He is termed "*the ONLY-begotten*" Son of God. The angel, indeed, said to Mary, "The POWER of the HIGHEST shall *overshadow* thee; therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God;"² but that does not mean that the whole Sonship of Christ originated in or commenced with His incarnation; on the contrary, as the overshadowing refers to the cloud of glory in which the Divine Redeemer so long dwelt above the mercy-seat, and as He is elsewhere called "the Power of God," and may here be called "the Power of the Highest," so the promise in these words may be taken to mean that when the Holy Spirit prepared in Mary a body for the Divine Redeemer, He would take it into union with His divine person, and so her offspring would, in respect of His divinity, be called the Son of God. The title "*only-begotten*" may thus be considered as applying, not to His human nature, but to His divine; and as applying to His divine nature because of His eternal generation from the Father, a generation which is peculiar to Himself, and in virtue of which He is *of* the Father, *from* the Father, *with* the Father. This view of the title is strengthened by the fact that it is in connection, not with ordinary matters, but only with

¹ John i. 3; I John iv.

² Luke i.

great realities that the title is used. Thus, to express God's *unsearchableness*, the *intimacy* of the Father and the Son, the perfect *manifestation* of the Deity in Christ, and the *majesty* of gospel truth, it is said, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."¹ To *exalt the glory* of "the WORD made flesh," it is styled "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."² To give the *highest possible view* of the *love of God*, it is said, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son, that we might live through Him;"³ and to proclaim His divine existence before He appeared in our nature on earth, to set forth His human nature as but the earthly tabernacle of His divine majesty, and to describe such displays as He made of His sovereign power and mercy, in saying to the stormy sea, "Peace, be still;" to the diseased leper, "I will, be thou clean;" to the trustful paralytic, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," it is said, "The WORD was made flesh, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father;" that is, we beheld in Him such glory as became Him who eternally dwelt in the un-created light as one with the Father, as His co-equal and co-eternal Son.

Second, As the only-begotten Son He "is *in the bosom* of the Father." These words express the most intimate relation and the tenderest affection between the Father and the Son. They express the Son's perfect oneness with the Father, His consequent direct, full, and everlasting insight into the divine nature, and a corresponding love to the Father, which is as infinite as are the perfections which occasion this love.

Third, He is "God's *dear* Son,"⁴ and "the Father's

¹ John i.² John i.³ 1 John iv.⁴ Col. i.

beloved Son.”¹ The only proper interpretation of these phrases is, that being God’s co-equal, co-eternal Son, He is the infinite object of the Father’s infinite love. The whole love of God, His boundless love, finds in His Son a boundless object, and so a capacity to contain and to comprehend it all, as well as an object worthy of it all. And so it seems to be eminently on account of the Father’s love to the Son that it is said of the Deity in His own Word, “GOD IS LOVE.”

3. We cannot overrate the practical importance to ourselves of knowing and believing in Jesus Christ as thus “the Son of God,” the only-begotten, the “dear” and “beloved” Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father. (1) As such, He it is that *reveals God* to us; for as no man knoweth the Son but the Father, so “no man knoweth who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.”² “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”³ Hence His words, “Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee; as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him: and this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,” &c.⁴ (2) The Son of God is the *only way for us to the knowledge, love, and enjoyment* of God. Says He, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me;”⁵ “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.”⁶ To *know the Son of God and to believe in Him* brings us into a *gracious relationship* to the Father: “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also.”⁷ (3) The *Sonship* of Christ is a ground of perfect

¹ Matt. iii.² Luke x.³ John i.⁴ John xvii.⁵ John xiv.⁶ John ii.⁷ John xiv.

confidence in the *all-sufficiency* of His *redeeming work*: "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep; . . . therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father."¹ (4) *His Sonship* sustains the faith of believers: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ; this is the true God, and eternal Life."² Hence (5) the *certain salvation* of all who believe in Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer; for "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."³ And hence (6) the *importance*, the *preciousness of the Bible as the written Word of God to us*; for "these things are written that ye may believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name."⁴

It is well remarked by Treffrey, to whom we are indebted for a number of our present observations, that these two titles of Christ, "the WORD of God" and "the SON of GOD," combine to give a more complete view than either of them, separately, would have afforded of His relations within the Godhead. They alike suggest, indeed, the idea of relations within the Godhead, and the further idea of a production flowing from a producer within it. But while the idea of distinct *personal* subsistence in the Deity is not suggested by the title "the WORD of God," this idea is involved in the title the SON of God. Again, while the absolute *oneness* of the Deity is but obscurely conveyed by the title "the SON

¹ John x.² I John v.³ John iii.⁴ John xx.

of God," that oneness is more clearly set forth in the title, 'the WORD of God.' Further, while the title, 'the WORD of God,' sets forth a relation within the Godhead of an *intellectual* character, the title 'the SON of God' sets forth the *active love*, and the occasions for its exercise, eternally existing in the essence of the Deity. And still further, as regards the fact, that the different persons in the Godhead are the *same* in substance, and *equal* in power and glory, while that fact is not so manifestly exhibited in the title of Christ as the SON of God, it is clearly suggested by His title of "the WORD of God."

III. *Other terms*, akin to those already dwelt upon, are employed in Scripture, to set forth the relation of Christ, as a divine person, to the other persons in the Godhead. Thus—

First, He is called "the *brightness of God's glory*." "God is light," and Christ is that light shining out. The glory which is the source and centre, and the brightness flowing from it, eternally exist together. The sun in the heavens and its radiating beams are the same light; and the Father and the Son are the same in substance. Eternally begotten of the Father, the Son is of the same essence with the Father, as the light of the sun is of the same essence with the sun itself. Yet the rays are distinct from the sun; and Christ, as the Son of God, is distinct from God the Father. But as the natural sun cannot exist without the brightness that flows from it, and the brightness cannot exist without the fountain from which it flows, so the first person in the Godhead, the Father, cannot exist without the Second, the Son; or the second, the Son, without the Father, the first. Thus the Father and the Son are alike everlasting. They are alike uncreated and eternal.

Second, Christ is called "the *express image* of God's per-

son,"¹ and "the *image* of the *invisible* God."² The coin takes the likeness of the die; the wax the likeness of the seal; and in either case the correspondence is exact in respect of the whole likeness, and of each of its parts: and so there is a perfect likeness between the Son of God, as the image of the Father, and the Father's person or substance. The Son answers to the Father, as the form in the wax to the seal; He is the perfect image of the Father; in respect of power, wisdom, and goodness, and other perfections, He is one with the Father; in other words, He is of the same nature; He is the exact resemblance of the Father's substance, of His eternal, infinite, ineffable essence: "the image of the invisible God;" a likeness in which He existed before anything was created, and when God alone existed as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Third, and finally, He is set forth in Philip. ii. as "in the *form* of God." Although the word translated "*form*" properly denotes the shape or outline of an object, and not directly its substance or nature; yet it presupposes the nature of which the form is the manifestation, just as the figure or shadow of any object implies a body or substance which determines the figure or outline. To say then that Christ had the form of God, is to say that He had the nature of God; just as to say, as it is immediately afterwards said by the Apostle, that "He took the *form* of a *servant*," is to say that He took the nature as well as the place of a servant. Hence the force of the whole sentence, Being in the form of God, *He counted it not robbery to be equal with God.* That is, as the clause may be translated, He did not deem His equality with God a thing to grasp at; He did not refuse to part with the outward manifestation of His Godhead; He willingly veiled it under a human

¹ Heb. i.² Col. i.

form, by taking our nature and appearing as "the Son of Man" upon the earth.

We have already noticed the practical importance of a due knowledge and remembrance of Christ as the eternal Word and Son of God. Not less manifest is the practical value of a spiritual sight and apprehension of Him as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person," and as "in the form of God." As sinners we are lost and need salvation. Christ is revealed as our Redeemer. But we may be ready to say, What is there in His lowly condition, and suffering life, and final crucifixion, to bring us to Him for the salvation that we need? The answer is, that because of what He did and endured in our nature, in connection with what was veiled behind and under His humanity, there is everything in Christ to fix and rivet our attention, to draw out our desires and longings toward Him, to awaken and sustain our confidence in His grace and power, and to render Him the supreme object of our reverence and love, our gratitude and joy. For in this wearer of the form of a servant we behold Him who was in the form of God. In this man of sorrows we see the brightness of the uncreated glory. In this servant of the Father, whose visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men, we behold the express image of the Father's person. His actual power to save us, as a Redeemer, therefore, is equal to His apparent weakness. His glory in saving us is equal to the shame which He suffered in our behalf. His blood, which He poured out as a sacrifice, is precious and powerful enough to cleanse us from all sin. The obedience which He rendered for us, furnishes to us a resistless title to all the blessings of the divine favour and of eternal life. His intercession within the vail saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. His throne in the heavens makes all things work together for

good to His redeemed, and secures to them the fittest place in all the universe for their perpetually showing forth the praises of God. The light of the knowledge of the divine glory shining into them from the face of Christ, prepares them for the greatest possible nearness for ever to the God of glory. And Christ's fulness of grace and truth as the only begotten of the Father, out of which they are filled, at length prepares them for finding their own fulness of joy in God's immediate presence, and pleasures at his right hand for evermore.

The titles and terms applied to Christ in Scripture, which we have in this discourse endeavoured to explain, not only combine to furnish conclusive evidence of His supreme divinity, and an impressive view of His personal relation to the Father and to the Holy Spirit within the Godhead; they do more: they cast a flood of light on the work of Christ as the Redeemer, and on our solemn and affecting and eventful relations to that work. They show the force of the words, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent;" "He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son, hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;" "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy:" "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father;" "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

Considering who Christ is, the declaration is seen to be a just and necessary one, "No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost." When any man, with a spiritual discernment and love of the truth which he expresses, can say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," to that man Christ is saying, "Blessed art thou, for flesh and

blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

Here, too, comes into view the preciousness of Christ's word. “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me. . . . He will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.”

Finally, if after all that is thus revealed concerning Christ, He continues to be regarded by any to whom these words have come, “as a root out of a dry ground,” and as “without form or comeliness,” and they still “see no beauty in Him why they should desire Him,” such fatal blindness and insensibility ought to alarm them, and rouse them up to cry mightily to Him for His Spirit, to come, and, through the Word, reveal to them the things that concern His person and His work, until with their whole mind and heart they cling to Him, and rest upon Him, in faith and love, in gratitude and gladness.

And the life-long business of all whose eyes are divinely opened on His greatness, and whose hearts are filled with experience of His redeeming love, is to grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to be daily preparing to dwell and to serve for ever in the presence of His glory.

IV.

RELATION OF CHRIST TO CREATION, AS ITS MAKER AND PRESERVER.

“All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.”—JOHN i. 3.

BY whom is it here said that all things were made ? By “the WORD,” who “was in the beginning,” who “was with God,” who “was God,” and who “was in the beginning with God.” He Himself is before all things, that is, before all created things ; the uncreated, everlasting, self-existing One, as are the Father and the Holy Ghost ; the second person of the Triune Jehovah ; the eternal Word of God ; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. “All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.”

Creation springs from what may be called the blessed necessity on the divine nature to communicate itself. “God is *Light* ;” and it is of the nature of light to diffuse its brightness. “God is *Love* ;” and love does not coop itself up, but flows forth by a necessity of its nature. This inclination in the divine nature to communicate itself operates everlastingly, in the generation of the eternal Son from the eternal Father, and in the procession of the eternal Spirit from the Father and the Son. These three divine persons, who are the one living and true God, have from all eternity a mutual fellowship of light and love ; of which, all the communion which created spirits can have with God, or with each other, is but a faint and shadowy resemblance.

The glory of God, as thus infinitely perfect and infinitely

blessed, required the making of creatures in His own image, to contemplate, reflect, and enjoy His glory. "Thou art worthy, O Lord! to receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created all things; and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." In this work of creation, no doubt, each person of the Godhead performed His part. The Father did so, for "have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?"¹ So did the Holy Spirit; for "The Spirit of God hath made me."² "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth."³ But it specially devolved on the eternal "Word," and "Son of God," to carry forth the divine perfections from within the divine nature, and to stamp them, so far as that was possible, on the works that were created and made. "For by Him were created all things that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things; and by Him all things consist."⁴

Let us consider shortly the natural relations of Christ to the created universe, and then some of the more important practical reflections which they suggest.

I. THE NATURAL RELATIONS OF CHRIST TO THE CREATED UNIVERSE.

1. Christ is the MAKER of all things. "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and in earth."⁵ *All* things, literally all things great and small, all things that are found in existence, all derived their being from Christ. The meanest insect, and the mightiest of the heavenly host, equally owe to Christ, receive from Him, the existence which they have. The relation which all

¹ Malachi ii.

² Job xxxiii.

³ Ps. civ.

⁴ Col. i. 16, 17, 18.

⁵ Col. i.

things have to their Creator is a relation which they have to God alone. For in the beginning *God* created the heavens and the earth.¹ He is "the great God that formed all things."² "Thou, even Thou, art Jehovah alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host; the earth and all things that are therein; the sea and all that is therein; and Thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee."³ Yet Christ is He "by whom and for whom all things were created." He, therefore, is the God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, to whom all creatures owe their being, and to whom they are bound to dedicate all that they are and have.

2. Christ is the PRESERVER of all things. "By Him all things consist;"⁴ "upholding all things by the Word of His power."⁵ In order to His acting as the preserver of all things, Christ must be *omniscient*. He must know all things in order that He may be continually and thoroughly acquainted with all His creatures and all their circumstances, and thus provide for their wants, and preserve them in their appointed lots, and in their acting out their appointed destiny. He requires also to be possessed of *omnipotence*; possessed of a power that pervades and upholds all the works of His creative hand, and regulates and controls all their movements, and retains them in entire and perpetual subjection to His will. And He needs not less to be *all-wise*, in order to assign to them their endlessly varied positions, and the endlessly varied capacities by which they are fitted to fill their positions, and to serve the ends of their creation.

3. Christ is the OWNER of all things. Creation belongs to its Maker. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein; for He

¹ Gen. i.² Prov. xxvi. 10.³ Neh. ix.⁴ Col. i.⁵ Heb. i.

hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.¹ But "all things were made by the Word," by the Word that was "made flesh and dwelt among us," that is, by Christ. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." And so, on that as well as on other accounts, He says, "All things which the Father hath are mine;"² and again He says to the Father, "All mine are Thine, and Thine are mine."³

4. Christ is the divine RULER of the universe. "He has all power in heaven and on earth;"⁴ He is "Governor among the nations."⁵ "King of kings and Lord of lords."⁶ "God over all blessed for ever."⁷ "The head of all principality and power."⁸ He hath "a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."⁹ "It is the goodness of Christ that prompts, and His justice that directs, and His knowledge that discerns, and His power that executes, whatever is right, wise, and good, and prevents whatever is not."¹⁰ It was Christ who, as the Supreme Ruler, gave the law from Sinai.¹¹ It is His Spirit who hath inspired the Scriptures as the word, according to which men shall be justified or condemned. It was Christ that Isaiah saw as Jehovah on the Throne high and lifted up.¹² It is Christ who is about to judge the world in righteousness.¹³ Angels and principalities and powers are made subject to Him.¹⁴ Every creature which is in heaven and on earth is to ascribe to Him blessing, and honour, and glory, and power.¹⁵

¹ Ps. xxiv.⁵ Ps. xxii.⁹ Phil. ii.¹³ Acts xvii.² John xvi.⁶ Rev. xix.¹⁰ Dwight.¹⁴ 1 Peter iii.³ John xvii.⁷ Rom. ix.¹¹ Ps. lxxviii.; Eph. iv.¹⁵ Rev. v.⁴ Matt. xxviii.⁸ Col. ii.¹² Isa. vi.; John xii.

5. To Christ as Creator, Preserver, Owner, and Ruler of all things, as well as to Christ as Redeemer, *all homage* from all creatures is due.

The universe is made, upheld, and governed for the glory of Christ. All things were "created *for Him*," as well as "by Him."¹ He is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."² But it is "Jehovah" who "has made all things for Himself."³ And as all things are made by Christ, and for Himself, He is and must be Jehovah, to whom all glory from the universe is due.

And the glory due to Christ is rendered willingly by the good, unwillingly by the evil. "All men are required to honour Him as they honour the Father."⁴ All the angels of God are required to worship Him.⁵ "Every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue shall confess Him Lord."⁶ Abraham worshipped Christ under the tree at Mamre.⁷ Manoah and his wife worshipped Him.⁸ David worshipped Him.⁹ The seraphim worship Him.¹⁰ Stephen, when being martyred, worshipped Him.¹¹ Paul worshipped Him.¹² John worshipped Him.¹³ All Christians worship Him in baptism.¹⁴ All Christians worship Him in the prayer that concludes their public assemblies.¹⁵ All Christians are known by their calling on His name.¹⁶ The whole Church is commended to own Him as her Lord, and to worship Him.¹⁷ And "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them" are to be heard saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."¹⁸

¹ Col. i.⁶ Phil. ii.¹¹ Acts vii.¹⁵ 2 Cor. 13.² Rev. i.⁷ Gen. xviii.¹² 1 Thes. iii. 11, 12; 2 Cor. xii. 8.³ Prov. xvi. 4.⁸ Judg. xii.¹³ 2 John iii.¹⁶ Acts ix. 14.⁴ John v.⁹ Ps. xlv., lxxii., cii.¹⁷ Ps. xlv.⁵ Heb. i. 6.¹⁰ Isa. vi.¹⁴ Matt. xxviii.¹⁸ Rev. 5.

Title of First-Born.

6. There is a title given to Christ in Scripture which, while it implies His divinity and His place within the Godhead, more properly describes His place as first the Head of all creation, and next the Head of the redeemed. The title is that of "the first-begotten," or "the first-born of every creature," and "the first-born from the dead."

This title of "first-born," "first-born of every creature," does not directly set forth His eternal generation as the Son of God, for in that generation no one else has any part. In respect of it He is not "the *first-begotten*," but "the *only-begotten* of the Father." Neither does the title apply to His taking His human nature of the Virgin Mary, for though "her first-born," that would not have made Him "*the first-born*," "the first-born of every creature." So that the title of "first-born" is not applied to Christ in virtue of the origin of either His divine or His human generation.

The meaning of the title in question seems to be this. The first-born of a family was looked to as the head of the family, and the heir of all the inheritance, and in that way had a pre-eminence over all the other members of the family, and so the PRE-EMINENCE of Christ OVER ALL THINGS is indicated by his title of "THE FIRST-BORN." This, accordingly, is the view given of Him in the passages in which the title occurs. Thus, in Heb. i. 6, it is said, "When He bringeth in the *first-begotten* into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." That is, let their attitude and homage be such as become His *universal supremacy*. Again, it is said, in Col. i. 18, "He is the *first-born of every creature*, for by Him were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is

before all things, and by Him all things consist." The meaning of these words is, that He is at the head of the universe, being its Maker and Preserver.

Further, in Col. i. 18, it is said that He is "the first-born from the dead," or from among the dead, "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." The words cannot mean that He was the first in point of time to rise from the dead. For He was not so. But they mean that by rising, through His own power, from the grave, He secures the resurrection to eternal life of all who are in Him by faith. As the Living One, who was dead, and is alive again for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and death, He hath supreme power over the unseen regions; and He will raise up all His ransomed to live together with Him. In other words, He is at the head of all whom He makes to partake of His resurrection. In this way the three variations of the title given to Him, as "the first-born," "the first-born of every creature," and "the first-born from the dead," represent respectively His general supremacy, His supremacy over creation, and His supremacy over the redeemed.

His headship over creation, as set forth in the title, "the first-born," and "the first-born of every creature," is what we have more directly to do with at present. That headship is founded in, and flows from, two great facts: *First*, that He is the actual maker, preserver, owner, and ruler of the wide universe, and of everything which it contains; and *second*, that He is, equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, possessed of all divine perfections, and so fitted to take and keep the place which He holds as head of all the works of God, as well head of the redeemed.

II. Let us now notice some of the important PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS that are suggested by the truth now before us.

1. A variety of events connected with the birth of Christ

indicated that the Creator had become a creature. The fact that it was the Maker of the universe who, in the fulness of time, appeared on earth as a child born, and a Son given to us, was evidenced by the command of God when He thus "brought His first begotten into the world," that "all the angels of God should worship Him." This event, accordingly, received its appropriate acknowledgment from both angels and men. An angel from heaven came to Zacharias to announce the birth of a Son to him as the forerunner of the Messiah. Then an angel came to Mary to announce the divine conception of Jesus Himself. Afterwards an angel came from heaven to announce to the shepherds of Bethlehem His actual birth. At the same time "there appeared in the heavens a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill to men." Then, too, devout believers at Jerusalem were filled with the Holy Ghost, to enable them, in the highest and holiest strains, to welcome and proclaim His advent; and wise men from the east were brought by a guiding star to present their costly offerings and their adoring homage at His feet; and hell itself was moved to its depths, with the aid of the most powerful of wicked men upon the earth, to attempt to rid the world of its Creator, Preserver, Ruler, and Judge, as well as Redeemer, in the person of the child Jesus.

2. While He was in His humble human form on the earth, the relation of Christ to this world, and to all worlds as their Maker and Governor, explains much that He did, and much that occurred to Him, which otherwise would have been unintelligible. Even in the days of His humiliation, He moved about with mingled majesty and ease, among the works of creation, making them all obedient to His word. The very nature of the creatures, as the creatures of His hands, was changed by the silent workings of His

power ; as when He changed the water into wine. Acts of creative might were performed by Him, acts that were as truly divine as was the calling of the universe out of nothing into being, when again, and again, He multiplied a handful of loaves and fishes into food for thousands. All manner of sickness and of disease, and such as it would have baffled all human skill to cure ; blindness, deafness, want of speech, deadly fevers, loathsome leprosy, and other maladies were healed, not by a power superior to His own, but by His own power, by an act of His own sovereign will ; and that sometimes when the sufferers were before Him, to receive a word from His mouth or the touch of His hand ; and at other times, when the sufferers were absent, and only their friends pleaded with Him for His interposition, and then returned to find that, according to His word, the deliverance pleaded for had been bestowed. Death itself at His bidding, again and again, yielded up its prey. As He who hath His way in the sea, and His path in the great waters, He walked on the bosom of the deep as on the firm earth ; and when it was tempest-tossed, the billows, at the hearing of His voice, ceased their raging, and the storm was changed into a calm. When He came to the fig-tree covered with leaves, but destitute of fruit, and pronounced upon it His blighting sentence, it instantly withered away. Unclean spirits, demons of darkness, legions of devils, trembled at His presence, left their victims at His bidding, and even begged for pity at His hands. The enemies that came to seize Him in the garden recoiled from His look, went backwards from before Him, and fell prostrate and powerless at His feet, to show with what infinite ease He could have rid Himself of them for ever. When He yielded Himself to death as the atoning substitute of sinners ; amidst the sufferings of His human nature, soul, body, and spirit, by which He satisfied divine justice for their offences ; the heavens grew black and clothed

themselves with sackcloth, in the presence of His crucified humanity; the earth was rent with earthquakes; and many graves of departed saints were opened, and sent forth their dead. When He rose again from the grave, angels waited at His empty tomb to proclaim His resurrection. And when, in the presence of His disciples, He went up from the mount of Olives, myriads of angels received Him with their praises as He ascended to His glory. Thus, all through the history, even of His humiliation, from its commencement to its conclusion, His glory was ever and anon breaking through the lowly form that veiled it, revealing the presence of the Creator, Controller, and Disposer of all things.

3. The universe ought to appear to believers in a very attractive light, when looked upon as having come from under the creative hand of Christ, as dependent on His supporting power, and as provided for out of His inexhaustible goodness. To realise "the WORD OF GOD," "God's only begotten Son, the BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY, AND THE EXPRESS IMAGE OF HIS PERSON," coming forth from His position within the Godhead, to call into being the universe of creatures, and to stamp on them the traces of His own divine perfection, His wisdom, power, and goodness, is to invest them in our eyes with an exceeding yet softened brightness, with an unspeakable beauty, which they would not otherwise possess. At the same time it seems greatly to enhance His work of redemption, to look to Him as accomplishing it, on so many of His creatures who had ruined themselves, and in the midst of all the other works that first came from His creative hand.

Many Christians fail to realise aright creation as the work of Christ. They too generally separate in their minds the work of creation from that of redemption, as if His work of creation were as nothing to them, and His work of redemption were that alone with which to engage their minds. But

they engage their minds with the work of redemption to much less purpose, so long as they set the works of creation and redemption in an attitude of opposition to, or of alienation from each other, or if they but leave creation out of view, and occupy themselves only with redemption.

This too common practice of Christians renders inapplicable and strange to their minds the very psalms which God Himself has provided for them to sing through all ages, as His redeemed. Take as a specimen the 95th Psalm: "O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." A similar though fuller song of praise to God for the display which He gives of His power and wisdom and goodness, in the works of creation and providence, is furnished in the 104th Psalm. In that song, provided for the redeemed to sing to the Lord their God, they bless Him as very great—as clothed with honour and majesty—as making the clouds His chariots, and walking on the wings of the wind—as making His angels ministers, laying the foundations of the earth, and setting bounds to the waters of the ocean—as providing the mountain springs and streams and rivers, to give drink to the beasts of the field and of the sandy deserts, and to feed and cover with foliage the trees in which the birds have their habitation, and sing among the branches—as watering the earth, and making it fruitful of food for cattle, of bread for man, of wine to gladden his heart, and

of oil to make his face to shine—as sending the darkness, in which the beasts of the forest go forth to seek their meat from God, and then the light in which man goes forth to his labour till the evening—as forming the great and wide sea, bearing on its bosom the ships which unite the ends of the earth, and containing the myriads of creatures that live within its waters—and as causing these endless races of animated beings, in air, and earth, and ocean, to wait on Himself for their necessary food from His opened hand, and to die when He takes away their breath. No wonder if, in meditation of these works of God their Saviour, His redeemed are called on to adore Him, saying, “O Lord, how manifold are Thy works; in wisdom Thou hast made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches. . . . The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever; the Lord shall rejoice in all His works. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: He toucheth the hills, and they smoke. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul; praise ye the Lord.”

If any followers of the Lamb regard as uncongenial the worship of the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe, they cannot be connecting Christ with His own works, and must be fancying that, by keeping out of view His presence and agency in creation, they all the more honour Him in His work of redemption. How much this imagination contradicts His word, must appear from the psalms to which we have just referred. But the New Testament writings give no more countenance than the Old to such conduct. The great Epistle to the Hebrews begins with saying of Christ that He “made the worlds,” that He “is upholding all things by the word of His power,” and that He is the

appointed "heir of all things." In the Epistle to the Colossians, it is said of Christ, "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, . . . and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." And John, in the commencement of His gospel, says of Christ as "THE WORD," "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made."

The friends of Christ ought thus to find continual matter for praise to Him, in His works of creation and providence. For how safe may they thus see themselves in His keeping. How certainly He will make all things to work together for their good. With what ease He restrains and will overwhelm all His and their enemies. With what unerring certainty and resistless force He will maintain and advance His kingdom of peace, until He fill the earth with His glory. How surely and safely, in His own time and way, He will bring each of His redeemed safe through the troubles and dangers of time, to the place prepared for them in His eternal kingdom. How swiftly He will at length cast out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, burn up the earth with all its works, introduce the new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, send all His enemies into the regions of sin and woe, and gather to Himself the myriads of the redeemed and the holy, to dwell for ever before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Considerations like these, that concern alike the honour of Christ and their own and others' salvation in and through Him, ought to make His presence in all His works, a continued occasion for praising Him with higher intelligence, and with loftier feelings of trust and love, of gratitude and joy.

Moreover, the deeply-felt inadequacy of all their praises to set forth His glory aright, ought to make them eager and glad to call for the aid of all His creatures and His works

to join with them in giving to Him the glory due. An instinctive feeling of that kind in the heart of a devout husband, in the midst of a deep religious awakening in the west of Scotland, above forty years ago, broke forth in the following manner: The good man had been much troubled by the apparent indifference of his wife to the work of God going on around her. Perhaps she had not been quite so callous as her outward appearance seemed to indicate. At any rate, one day the husband was visited by a minister, when his wife was in a neighbouring house, and he went to bring her home. Being asked by her why he was so pressing for her immediate return, with a heart full of divine realities, and of concern for her interest in them, his reply was, "Come away, for the Master calleth for thee." These words, when uttered, went at once with divine power to her heart, broke down her spirit, and laid her at the feet of Jesus, not only a stricken penitent, but a believer and glad confessor; and with faith, and love, and gratitude, and joyfulness, she proclaimed her acceptance of Christ, and her unreserved surrender of herself to His service. On witnessing the sudden blessed change, as he stood over her, the soul of her partner in life was filled with feelings, which instinctively found vent in the commencing words of the 148th Psalm, "Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights. Praise ye Him all His angels; praise ye Him all His hosts. Praise ye Him, sun and moon; praise Him all ye stars of light." Yes, and if we experience and realise aright the riches of the Redeemer's grace in our own and others' salvation, in our conscious inability to praise Him adequately, we too will call on all His creatures and works around, to help, by joining with us, in His praise. Taking up the psalm, whose commencing words we have just quoted, with a full heart

we will say, "Praise Him, ye heaven of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. . . . Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps; fire and hail; snow and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling His word; mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowls; kings of the earth, and all people; princes and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens; old men and children; let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is excellent, His glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of His people; the praise of all His saints, even of the children of Israel; a people near unto Him. Praise ye the Lord."

4. There is another great consideration which renders this relation of Christ to creation as its Maker and Preserver, deeply interesting to all believers, and, not only to them, but to other intelligent creatures, the consideration, viz., that in carrying out to its completion His redeeming work, He will repair the evils, which the sin of man has wrought upon the works of God around us, and bring them into a higher, holier, and happier harmony, than even that which the entrance of sin into this world destroyed.

Writing in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, of the deliverance of believers in Christ from sin and ruin, of their restoration to spiritual and eternal life, and of their final entrance into glory, and of the participation of the creation around, first in the ruin and then in the redemption of man, the Apostle says, "For the earnest expectation of the creature" (the creation) "waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature" (the creation) "was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creation itself shall be delivered from the

bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

The creation, of which this shaded picture is here presented to us, when it came first from under the forming hand of its Maker, was a scene of unmingled light and life, and order and beauty, a fitting habitation for him, who was made in the image of God, and invested with deputed lordship over it. But when sin entered, the awful sentence came forth, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." Yet the proper end of the works of God is to proclaim His perfections and glory; and they are diverted from that end by the wickedness of men, for so the creature was made subject to vanity. It is, however, thus made subject, "not willingly." And it groans and travails in pain by being thus prostituted to purposes so different from the end of its existence, and so dishonouring to its Maker and Preserver.

But Christ came to redeem not only the sinners that are saved, but the creation which they have filled with defilement and disorder. Therefore, while on the one hand He turns a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein, on the other hand, when He has a people to provide for, He turneth the wilderness into standing water, and the dry ground into water springs.¹ When His way is known on the earth, and His saving health among all nations, then shall the earth yield her increase.² When all ends of the earth have experienced His salvation, the sea shall roar and the fulness thereof, the floods shall clap their hands, and the hills shall be joyful together; the

¹ Ps. cvii.

² Ps. lxxvii.

fields shall be joyful and all that is therein ; and all the trees of the wood shall rejoice before the Lord ; for He cometh, He cometh to judge the earth : He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth.¹

Successive changes happily wrought by Christ on the very visible creation around, in harmony with the successive stages of advancement reached by His reign of grace in and over His redeemed, shall, however, be but earnest of the grand final consummation. For when His ransomed and risen myriads are being all gathered around Him, the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; and the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. And when even the visible creation, which sin has defiled, is thus overtaken by the last conflagration, out of its ashes there shall stand forth to view a redeemed and holy creation, even the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.²

This renewal of the visible creation in a more glorious form than that which has been marred by sin, and a form which He will never again permit moral evil to pollute and derange, shall put the capstone on the works of Christ's creative hand, and give peculiar force and sweetness to the chorus of the universe, when every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, shall be heard saying, " Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." ³

5. And finally, much may be gathered from these relations of Christ to creation, as its Maker, Governor, and

¹ Ps. xcvi., xcvi.

² 2 Pet.

³ Rev. v.

Redeemer, to encourage earnest inquirers in coming to Him for salvation.

CHRIST is their CREATOR, from whom they have departed ; but instead of treating them as marred vessels to be cast away, or dashed in pieces, He is at hand in the character of the Redeemer, to re-create, to renew them, in His own image, and so to turn them into vessels of mercy filled with the treasures of His grace. CHRIST is their PRESERVER, in enmity to whom they have spent the life preserved by His ceaseless care ; yet He is at hand in readiness to quicken them to a new life hidden with Himself in God for ever. CHRIST is their LAWGIVER and JUDGE, whose laws they have daily broken, and whose condemnation they have incurred ; but He has in their nature Himself fulfilled that very law for such as they are, and endured and exhausted its curse ; and, on the footing of this His finished work, He offers a full and free forgiveness, and all the blessings of spiritual and eternal life. CHRIST is their OWNER ; and they are His rightful property, and His alone ; and although they have renounced His service, and sold themselves to the service of sin and Satan, He has purchased redemption for them with the price of His own precious blood, and He invites their return to His service, to their duty and their happiness, that He may replace them for ever amid His renovated works. Can any considerations be imagined, that are more fitted to touch the hearts of burdened and anxious seekers after safety and rest, to touch their hearts with a sense of their misery away from Christ, and to animate them with the strongest desires of embracing, and being embraced by Him ? If Christ, their maker, preserver, lawgiver, judge, owner, and redeemer, is searching for them as the woman searched for her lost piece of silver, and ready to rejoice when He has found them ; if He has come after them into the wilderness of sin and

misery, like the shepherd after his lost sheep, and will rejoice to bear them back to His fold; if He is sure to see them, when they have but turned their faces toward Him, at however great a distance, and to meet them with a forgiving and rejoicing welcome to their home, as the father did his prodigal son: ah! surely, nothing should keep them from being found believing, and so accepted, penitents at Jesus' feet.

V.

CHRIST "IN THE LAW OF MOSES."

"All things must be fulfilled which were written IN THE LAW OF MOSES . . . concerning me."—LUKE XXIV. 44.

Preliminary truths to be kept in view.

IN finding out what is "written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning" Christ, we are to be guided by the light which is cast on these writings by the revelations contained in the New Testament records; and, accordingly, such truths as the following are to be kept in view:—*First*, Christ, as the Word, was in the beginning with God, and was God; the only-begotten of the Father, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person;¹ the Father's co-equal, co-eternal Son.² *Second*, By Christ "were all things created that are in heaven and on earth; and by Him all things consist."³ *Third*, Adam, as our common father and representative, being created in the image of God, was placed under the divine law, requiring perfect obedience as the condition of life, and having death attached to it as the penalty of transgression.⁴ *Fourth*, Adam broke the law, and brought his posterity with himself into a state of sin and ruin; so that now all are by nature children of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins.⁵ *Fifth*, As is the relation of Adam to all mankind as fallen, so is the relation of Christ to all the saved. "The first Adam was made a living soul;" partaker of a life which he

¹ John i.; Heb. i.

³ Col. i.

⁵ Ephes. ii.

² John i.

⁴ Rom. v.

forfeited for himself and his race: "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, is a quickening Spirit;" the giver of a life to all the redeemed that cannot be lost, except His ability to preserve it fails.¹ *Sixth*, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission:"² divine justice requires the sacrifice of life for sin; therefore Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and the final everlasting song of all the saved shall be, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."³ *Seventh*, The eternal life to which, from the beginning, ransomed sinners have been brought, was promised to Christ, as their Surety, before the world began.⁴ In respect of the efficacy of His death, He was "a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."⁵ He was the light and life of the redeemed from the beginning of time. All through this world's history the Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son.⁶ "No man hath seen God at any time," since time began; "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."⁷ All gracious manifestations of God have ever been made by His Son alone; and "no man knoweth who the Father is save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him."⁸ *Eighth*, The second person in the God-head having eternally undertaken the work of Redeemer, and having actually carried it on from the moment of the Fall, is revealed in Scripture as, in anticipation of His incarnation, assuming, time after time, a visible and even a human form, in His gracious dealings with men. Of this fact abundant proof will be given in this discourse, when we come to speak of His appearance to Abraham,⁹ to Jacob,¹⁰ to Moses,¹¹ and to other servants of God. In these passages

¹ 1 Cor. xv.⁴ 2 Tim. i.⁷ John i.¹⁰ Gen. xxxii.² Heb. ix.⁵ Rev. xiii.⁸ Matt. xi.¹¹ Exod. iii. 23.³ Rev. v.⁶ John v.⁹ Gen. xvii.

also, and in others, He is set before us as Jehovah God, the Angel of Jehovah, the Angel of God, the Angel in whom the name of God is,¹ the Angel of Jehovah's presence,² the Angel of the Covenant,³ the Angel that redeems from all evil.⁴ We ought to have these truths in our view when endeavouring to ascertain the testimony given to Christ as Redeemer in the writings of the Old Testament. At present we confine our attention to the witness borne to Christ in the law of Moses. This witness divides itself into two parts.

I. THINGS WRITTEN IN THE LAW OF MOSES CONCERNING CHRIST FROM ADAM TO MOSES.

When our first parents fell, they heard "the voice of the LORD GOD walking in the trees of the garden." "*The voice of the Lord*" may be rendered "the Word of the Lord," and so viewed as referring to Christ as "the Word" who "was in the beginning with God, and was God," "by whom all things were made."⁵ But apart from that rendering, and on the grounds already stated of Christ's relation to the redeemed, as fixed in the everlasting covenant, and as operative from the moment of the Fall, we are warranted to conclude that it was in the person of the Son, as Mediator, that the Lord God appeared to our fallen parents, and at once revealed the redeeming mercy prepared for them and for their race. "The Lord God said unto the serpent . . . I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."⁶ The words foretold that "the Son of God" taking our nature into union with His divine, and becoming "the son of man," would, in due time, be "manifested to destroy the works of the devil,"⁷ by "suffering, the

¹ Exod. xxiii.

³ Mal. i.

⁵ John i.

⁷ 1 John iii.

² Isa. lxiii.

⁴ Gen. xlviii.

⁶ Gen. iii.

just for the unjust," and by putting forth His mighty power, to save them from sin and death, and to raise them to spiritual and eternal life. The bruising of the heel of the woman's seed, that is, the suffering which Christ would endure from Satan, in delivering sinners from his power, and the deliverance thus accomplished, became, from that moment, the great object of desire and hope, and the leading subject, in all God's revelations in type and prophecy, of His saving grace; just as, since the crucifixion, Christ and Him crucified has been the great theme of the gospel, and will be for ever the song of the redeemed.

A suffering and a conquering Saviour was thus held forth to sinful men as their hope, from the beginning. But it never could have occurred to themselves, to seek in the meantime to propitiate God by the blood of animals, as it would have been, and must have been seen to be, only an offence to the Most High, to offer such blood as *in itself*, a price for their redemption. Therefore, the offering of such animal sacrifices at the first must have been by divine appointment; and so they derived all their value from being, and from being treated as, divinely authorised types and shadows of the one great sacrifice that was at length offered on the cross. This view of the divine origin and atoning nature of animal sacrifices, is set forth, more or less plainly, in all parts of Scripture, and, with special fulness, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Accordingly, it is probable that the coats of skin in which the holy and merciful One clothed our fallen and stricken parents, were taken from the animals whose blood had been shed as a typical atonement; and that the Lord's clothing of them was designed to show His gracious nearness, to clothe them with the righteousness and salvation which these sacrifices shadowed forth.

When Abel offered the firstlings of his flock, and Cain

the mere fruits of the ground, the reasonable view of the different results is, that the acceptance and the rejection which their offerings respectively met with from God, was owing to the acknowledgment by Abel, and the denial by Cain, of the need of a sacrifice for sin, and of an atoning Saviour;¹ the presence and active working in Abel of true faith in, and love to, the holy yet gracious God to whom he approached, and with whom he was brought into conscious fellowship;² and the presence and working in Cain of that pride, on account of which God rejected his offering, and frowned upon himself. Further, as "two cannot walk together except they be agreed;" and as reconciliation and fellowship with God are the experience only of such as "make a covenant with Him by sacrifice;"³ the fact that "Enoch walked with God" when mankind generally were departing from Him; the fact that he foretold "the coming of the Lord" (that is of Christ) "to judge the ungodly;"⁴ and the fact of His bodily translation to heaven, combine to exhibit him as a memorable trophy of Christ's redeeming grace and power. Further still, as regards Noah, he was a just man, and perfect in his generation, and also walked with God, and being warned of God of things not seen as yet, believed them, and, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. And as he was "a preacher of righteousness," both by his personal conduct and by his words of warning; so we are expressly told in Scripture that it was "Christ who, by His Spirit" in Noah, employed him in warning that generation of coming wrath, and also employed the ark as a type of Himself, for the salvation of Noah and his family. Moreover, no one who knows the Scriptures, can reasonably

¹ Gen. iv.² Heb. xi.³ Ps. l.⁴ Jude.

doubt the typical significance of those propitiatory, thanksgiving, and self-consecrating sacrifices, which Noah offered subsequently, when God established His covenant of grace with him and with his seed after him.¹

After the flood, Noah's posterity so rapidly fell away from the worship of God that, but for His extraordinary dealings with Abraham and his descendants, idol-worship would have quickly become universal among mankind. There were, indeed, for generations, instances to be found of true faith and piety. There was such a case as that of JOB. In one of these early ages, and, so far as appears, in a region distinct from that in which Abraham and his believing offspring were found, lived that patriarch, who, by the habitual offering of sacrifice, kept up his gracious relation to the Most High;² and was sustained in his sore affliction by the truth embodied in His words, "I know that my Redeemer liveth,"³ &c. Not less noticeably, in the time of Abraham, there lived near to him, in the heart of Canaan, MELCHIZEDEK, whose name meant "*King of Righteousness*," and who was "*King of Salem*," which means "*King of Peace*;" while he was at the same time "*Priest of the Most High God*:" and of this greatest of all the types of Christ, as the Church's Priest and King, it is said that his greatness consisted in being "made like to the Son of God," and "abiding a priest continually."⁴ Instances like these, however, belonging to different lands and ages, were but a few lingering lights, provided by God to shine in the midst of general and growing darkness; and that darkness would speedily have become entire and final, but for the provision divinely made through Abraham, and through the favoured family and nation descending from him, to preserve the knowledge, fear, and worship of God in the world, until the Messiah came.

¹ Gen. ix. ; 1 Pet. iii.

² Job xix.

³ Job i.

⁴ Gen. xiv. ; Heb. vii.

The call of Abraham commenced a great era in the history of redemption. He, and after him Isaac, the son specially promised to him and long waited for, and then the family of Jacob, one of the two sons of Isaac, and at length the nation into which the family of Jacob grew, were, by the divinely appointed rite of circumcision, separated and set apart from all other individuals, families, and nations, and successively dealt with in a very marvellous and memorable manner, with a view to direct their faith to the promised Deliverer, to preserve the knowledge and fear, the worship and service of the true God upon the earth, and to prepare for the sending forth of His Son in the fulness of time; as well as to form the line of descent, in which He would take the nature of man, when He became God manifested in the flesh. "The gospel was preached to Abraham," when he received the promise, "in thee shall all nations be blessed." The blessing which comes on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, is the blessing promised in the covenant which God made and repeatedly renewed with that patriarch.¹ Salvation in Christ was the blessing thus given to him and his seed, and through that channel to all nations. And the blood of sacrifice that sealed God's covenant of blessing with Abraham, typified "the blood of the everlasting covenant," which makes sure its promises to all that believe.²

Now there is abundant evidence that it was Christ, who, as Jehovah-God, appeared to Abraham, time after time, renewing, once and again, the covenant of blessing, of which the rite of circumcision was appointed to form the seal. This Jehovah, Son of God, Redeemer of the world, was "THE LORD" who, as one of "three men" apparently, came to Abraham on the plains of Mamre.³ On that occasion two

¹ Gal. iii. ; Gen. xv., xviii., xix., xxii.

² Gal. iii. ; Heb. xiii.

³ Gen. xviii.

of these visitors, who proved to be created angels, soon went on their way to Sodom: while the third, who remained to speak with Abraham, proved to be Jehovah, the Almighty and Faithful Promiser, and the sovereign righteous Ruler and Disposer, who, long after, in the days of His flesh, said to the Jews, "before Abraham was, I am."¹ Abraham's faith in this divine Redeemer was counted for righteousness; and his faith was so counted, as making the patriarch one with Him, in whom all that believe are made the righteousness of God."²

As Jacob, when fleeing from Esau, lay out all night at Bethel, he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with angels descending and ascending on it, and JEHOVAH his Redeemer at the top; who, as his and his father's GOD, promised then and there, to protect and bless him in his exile, and to bring him home, at length, in safety:³ and, alluding to that vision, Jesus said to Nathaniel, "Hereafter ye shall see the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man;"⁴ and so declared Himself to be, with the ministry of angelic and other agencies, the Preserver, under whose care Jacob was secure. Again, on his return, being alarmed at the approach of Esau, and having retired to a solitary place for prayer, he soon found "a *man* wrestling with him," in whom he speedily recognised his almighty Protector and Guide; to whom therefore he clung until he obtained His blessing, and with a lightened grateful heart could say, "I have seen GOD face to face, and am preserved."⁵ Hence the words in Hosea (chap. xii.), "Yea he (*i.e.* Jacob) had power over the ANGEL and prevailed: he wept and made supplication to Him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us, even THE LORD of hosts, THE LORD is his Memorial." In reference to these events in his life,

¹ John viii.² Rom. iv. ; 2 Cor. v. ; Gal. iii.³ Gen. xxviii.⁴ John i.⁵ Gen. xxxii.

toward the end of it, Jacob praying for the sons of Joseph said, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God who fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads."¹ "Jehovah," "God," "the Angel," "the Redeemer," who appeared to him in the form of "a man," and was "the God of his fathers," was the Son of God who became man, that He might be Christ Jesus, Saviour, and Lord.

The same Redeemer who had dealt so graciously with Jacob, was looked to, and lived upon by *Joseph*, as his guide and strength, all through his eventful history. By faith in this Divine Redeemer as the God of his fathers, and the fear of God that filled him, and the blessing of God that rested on him, he proved² a truthful and obedient son, a faithful and trusted bond-servant in the house of Potiphar,³ a successful manager of all the concerns committed to him in the prison to which he was unjustly consigned,⁴ and the ablest and wisest administrator possible of the interests of a great kingdom, when given into his hands.⁵ He showed the power of his faith, and the piety, rectitude, and benevolence of his character, by refusing to sin, when strongly tempted in the house of Potiphar, by giving glory to the true God, when he first stood before Pharaoh, by his forgiving and loving treatment of his brethren when they were wholly in his power, by realising and acting out his mission as the divinely-provided preserver of his father's house, by giving names to his sons, which proclaimed his gratitude to the God of his fathers as the Author of his mercies, and the God of his confidence and hopes, and by placing his brethren under the most solemn obligation, when he was dying, to look forward to their redemption from all the troubles that were coming on them in Egypt, and to carry out of it his bones

¹ Gen. xlviii.³ Gen. xxxix.⁵ Gen. xli.² Gen. xxxvii.⁴ Gen. xxxix.

and bury them beside those of his fathers, when their redemption was accomplished.

Christ the life of the saved, from the first.

The redeeming power of the truth in and over believers to whom, in those early ages, it was by the Spirit made effectual for their salvation, is evidenced practically by what is recorded of their personal character and actual history, in contrast with the unbelieving and earthly character and history of the larger portions of the successive generations to which they respectively belonged. Judging of the truth revealed to the generations of men before the flood, and for some centuries after it, by the short histories which we have of distinguished servants of God in these successive ages, as well as by the references to others belonging to these ages who lived to themselves, and for earth and time, the one great lesson taught is, that while in Adam all died, only in Christ were any made alive. Abel's faith in the typified sacrifice, wrought by love, purified his heart, and overcame the world; secured for him the tokens of the divine favour; and made his death precious in the sight of the Lord, and, to himself, gain unspeakable. The Spirit of Christ, in the believing men of the days of Enos, turned them into public associated worshippers of Jehovah, on whom rested His grace, and mercy, and peace. Enoch's divinely-countenanced walk with God on earth, and blessed translation to heaven, furnishes through all time, the most powerfully-constraining guidance and strength to all, to whom to live is Christ, and to die is gain. The absence of this faith and holy life, and the worldly enterprise and prosperity and indulgences which Cain and his race preferred, as they rapidly multiplied in the world, strikingly manifest the contrast, which has ever since been manifested, between those who are saved by grace, and those who live and die without it. The unholy

marriages which the professed servants of God at length made with the fair but graceless daughters of ungodly men, rapidly led to universal corruption. And when Noah, through the Spirit of Christ in him, practised openly the righteousness of faith, and by word and deed proclaimed to the wicked generation around him their sin and doom, in their combined pride and blindness of heart, they laughed him and his warnings to scorn, until the day that he entered into the ark, and the flood came and swept them all away.

The descendants of Noah, by whom the earth was again rapidly peopled, speedily became as prosperous and ungodly as those that lived before the flood. Not liking to retain the knowledge and to keep up the worship of God, they speedily changed His truth into a lie, and worshipped the creature more than the Creator, until, from paying divine homage to the heavenly bodies, they came to worship the idols which their own hands had made; and only here and there a remaining witness like Melchizedek, the most memorable type of Christ, and Job, who knew Christ as his Redeemer, and kept up intercourse with God by sacrifice, were found to uphold a testimony for God, amidst the ignorance and error, the image worship and the immoralities that prevailed among the populations of the earth.

In this state of things, Abraham was raised up, that in and through him the work of redemption might take a fresh start on a new path of progress, and that the Church might assume a new, advanced, and influential form and position on the earth. Under the call of God, made effectual by His grace, Abraham forsook country, kindred, and home, and "went out, not knowing whither he went," relying on God to bring him to a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance. Brought into the land which God promised, and failed not, in His own time, to give to the posterity of Abraham, the patriarch himself and his sons

Isaac and Jacob sojourned in it, as strangers would in a strange country, having no ground in it but what was needed for their grave. But he and they lived in it, not doubting that it would one day be the earthly portion of their race; and as regarded their own personal and intervening trials, they lived looking in faith to God for deliverance out of them all. The promises of spiritual and eternal blessings to him, however, were Abraham's chief treasure and support. The promise was made to him of Christ as his seed, and of a blessing from that seed to all the nations of the earth. Thus was the gospel preached to Abraham. Embracing the promises of this gospel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and others who were heirs together with them of the promises, confessed themselves pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and declared plainly that they desired and were seeking another and a better country, even the heavenly city, and the rest that remaineth there for the people of God. As the result of these wonderful visions of Christ, which we have noticed, as vouchsafed to these patriarchs—of their faith in the promises made to them, and which are all yea and amen in Him—and of the hopes of eternal life to which they were begotten, Abraham lived a life of self-sacrifice; and Isaac lived a life of quiet devout meditateness; and Jacob lived a life of prayerful struggles with the outward trials of his life, and the inward corruptions of his nature; acknowledging at the last, that he owed all past blessings, and looked for all good in the future, to the Angel that redeemed him from all evil. And as Joseph was at length left with the whole care of his father's numerous family, and that family was about to grow into a nation in Egypt, and also destined at once to deteriorate in their spirit and manners, and to suffer crushing trials, in the land of their sojourn; a signal mercy was bestowed upon them, in the godly as well as otherwise elevated character which Joseph dis-

played, as also in the wise, loving, effective provision which, so far as his great power extended, he made for them. The sufferings which he endured from friends and foes, and the virtues which were displayed and cherished in the midst of them, and the way which opened up through his very sufferings to his exaltation to authority and power in Egypt, and the use which he made of his position for the benefit of those from whom he suffered, render him, and will to the world's end render him, a striking type of Christ, in His humiliation and His exaltation, and a model of piety and virtue to all who are the subjects of His saving grace.

II. THINGS WRITTEN IN THE LAW OF MOSES, CONCERNING CHRIST, IN CONNECTION WITH, AND RELATIVE TO, THE DISPENSATION UNDER WHICH THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE PLACED IN THE TIME OF MOSES, AND THROUGH HIS INSTRUMENTALITY.

When the time was at hand, for the deliverance of Israel from the intolerable bondage to which they had been reduced in Egypt, "the Angel of THE LORD appeared to Moses, at Horeb, in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush. And God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And THE LORD said, I have seen the affliction of my people. . . . I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth my people. . . . I AM that I AM. Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. THE LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you: this is my name and this is my memorial for ever, unto all generations."¹ This Jehovah, Angel, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this I AM that I AM, *i.e.*, the ever-living unchangeable One, we have

¹ Exod. iii.

already seen to be the eternal Son of God, who at length and in due time, came into the world, in our nature, as the only Redeemer of God's elect, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Deliverance from Egypt.

When, as the result of the terrible judgments sent on Pharaoh and his people, the hour of Israel's deliverance approached, by divine command, on the tenth day of Nisan, which was afterwards the day of Christ's public entry into Jerusalem, they selected every family a lamb; and on the fourteenth day, between the ninth and eleventh hour, which were the day and hour of Jesus' death, they slew the lamb and sprinkled its blood on the lintels and posts of their doors; that the destroying angel might pass their dwellings, when he entered every house of the Egyptians, and slew the first-born of man and beast in all the land; and then with their loins girded, with their shoes on their feet, and with staff in hand, as ready to depart, they feasted, each family on the body of the victim, roasted in the fire and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and at once went forth, a ransomed nation, free to serve their God and Saviour:¹ thus typifying "Christ our passover, sacrificed for us; and our feasting on Him, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."² The Egyptians having followed them, and hemmed them in, between the horses and chariots of Pharaoh behind, and the Red Sea before them, the people became at once terrified and rebellious; when their divine deliverer, as "THE LORD," and "the angel of God," went in the pillar of cloud and fire between them and their enemies; and Moses having, with his rod in hand, by divine direction, stretched out his hand over the sea, the waters parted, the children

¹ Exod. xii.

² 1 Cor. v.

of Israel crossed in safety, and their pursuers attempting to follow them, were overwhelmed in the returning waters: leaving Moses to take up, and put into Israel's mouth, the song: "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my fathers' God, and I will exalt Him."¹

Israel a typical nation.

These words of Moses are quoted by Isaiah, to commence the song of praise, with which he follows a wonderful prophetic description of the blessed reign of Christ at length upon the earth.² This leads us here to notice summarily what, in the following observations, will come out in detail, viz., that as redemption of sinful men by Christ, was the great end of God's providential government of this world from the beginning, so, in particular, to the nation of Israel, now formally commencing its national existence, the events that happened to it, the institutions, ordinances, and laws given to it, and the whole of the divine dealings with it, had for their main object, to set forth in type, and symbol, and prophecy, the person and redeeming work of God's incarnate Son, as well as the actual presence of Christ with the nation, as the God of Israel, all through their eventful history. Circumcision, practised by divine command from the time of Abraham, signified "the circumcision of the heart" of those "who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."³ The passover, as we have already seen, typified the safety to be found by sinners only under the blood of Christ.⁴ And as Christ was "Jehovah," "the angel of God," who, in the pillar of cloud and fire, preserved and conclusively delivered the children of Israel when pursued by the Egyptians, and

¹ Exod. xiv. 15.

² Isa. xii.

³ Rom. ii. ; Phil. iii.

⁴ 1 Cor. v.

proved the destruction of their foes ; so this important event in Israel's history, was a type or symbol of the redemption which He would at length work out as God incarnate.¹ Nothing is more plainly set forth in Scripture than the designed connection, as well as difference, between the state of Israel under the law, and of believers under the gospel. "The law was Israel's schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, in whom we become sons of God."² As "children under tutors and governors," they were kept "in bondage" under "the elements of the world," under the rudimentary education to which they were confined ; being placed amidst rites and ceremonies that only faintly figured forth the truth and grace at length revealed in Christ.³ Their observing of meats and drinks and sacred seasons formed only "a shadow of good things to come ; but the body is of Christ."⁴ "The gifts" which their "priests offered according to the law," merely "served as an example and shadow of heavenly things."⁵ "Their ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary, were but figures for the time being of the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God," and whose blood "purges our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."⁶ The purifying with blood of almost all things under the law, as patterns of heavenly things, signified the purifying of these things themselves with better sacrifices.⁷ The law, therefore, had but a shadow, an imperfect shadow of good things to come ; but by one offering Christ hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified ; and now we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.⁸ Thus, in separating the children of Israel, and in preserving them separate from all other nations, the divine purpose was to

¹ Luke i. 68.² Gal. iii.³ Gal. iv.⁴ Col. iv.⁵ Heb. viii.⁶ Heb. ix.⁷ Heb. ix.⁸ Heb. x. j

make the dispensation under which they were placed, an impressive and an enduring representation of the great realities of the Gospel. In their persons, institutions, and laws, and in their whole circumstances and history, they became, like a vast picture-gallery, filled with types of Christ as the Redeemer, and of the redemption to be found in Him, for all kindreds, and nations, and peoples, and tongues. But that purpose could be served, only by upholding and magnifying the holiness of God's nature and government, in the very provision made by His mercy for the salvation of sinful men, and by making that provision of mercy the means of sanctifying all who experienced it, and so turning and elevating them into spiritual worshippers, faithful servants, and rejoicing children of God. And, as will appear more clearly as we proceed, this was the character and this was the tendency of the Mosaic dispensation.

Their dedication, sins, and mercies.

In passing through the sea, the children of Israel "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;"¹ they received him, and yielded themselves up to him as their divinely-appointed deliverer and leader, and as mediator between God and them, who would communicate to them what they were to believe, and the duty required at their hands; and so in that condition they typified all who are "baptized into Christ," and "saved, not by works of righteousness which they have done, but according to God's mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on them abundantly through Jesus Christ,"² and so yield themselves unto God to walk in newness of life. And their subsequent history is a history of miseries, and murmurings, and mercies, which represent the

¹ 1 Cor. x.

² Tit. iii.

sins and miseries of even the professed members of the Church of Christ, and the salvation which is experienced by such of them as have faith in a once crucified but now exalted Redeemer. Thus they come to Mara, and finding the waters too bitter to drink, they murmur against Moses;¹ and God provides a tree, which being thrown into the waters sweetens them: so signifying that many of God's appointments prove insupportably bitter, till the bitterness is taken from them, and they are sweetened to believers, by the virtue of His sufferings, "who bare our sins in His own body on the tree."² Again they break out into murmurings against Moses and Aaron for want of food: and manna is henceforth daily rained upon them from heaven;³ to typify Christ as the true bread which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world,⁴ and who has been from the beginning the spiritual meat of all believing souls.⁵ Soon thereafter they are again murmuring, and almost ready to stone Moses for want of water, when, by divine command, he with his rod smote the rock in Horeb and water came out of it that the people might drink;⁶ and to show what infinite realities were involved in these outward things, we are told expressly of the "fathers" of those days, that they did "all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."⁷

Transactions at Sinai, the Law, the National Covenant.

In the third month after their departure from Egypt, they came into the wilderness of Sinai, and camped before the mount, from which, amidst such awful tokens of divine majesty, the law was about to be delivered. And the first thing to be noticed here is that the LORD their GOD, who thus gave the law, was no other than the Son of God. This

¹ Exod. xv.

³ Exod. xvi.

⁵ 1 Cor. x.

⁷ 1 Cor. x.

² 1 Pet. ii.

⁴ John vi.

⁶ Exod. xvii.

is proved by the fact that the Lawgiver was the same Divine Person whom we have already seen to have revealed Himself to, and communed with, Adam, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses. This truth is further proved by comparing what is said in the 68th Psalm, with the use made of its words in the 4th chapter of Ephesians. In that psalm occur the words, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Now in the Epistle to the Ephesians (iv. 8, &c.) these words are quoted and applied to Christ, as exalted to give all grace to believers, "Wherefore He saith, when He ascended on high He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." And the transactions at Sinai, with all that followed, were suitable to and worthy of Him who was "set up from everlasting," and eternally "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and had His delight with the sons of men."¹ From the summit of Sinai, the LORD, with His own voice, published the law of the ten commandments; the law which is summed up in two, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself;" that law which is the transcript of His own perfections; which is and must be the unchangeable rule of His moral government; and which requires perfect obedience from His creatures as the condition of His favour; the law which, early in His public ministry, Jesus opened up in His Sermon on the Mount, in all its spirituality and extent, and to which, on behalf of all His redeemed, He rendered the perfect obedience, by which all who believe in Him, are made for ever righteous in the sight

¹ Prov. viii.

of God.¹ The thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the smoking of the mountain, amidst which God spake His law to the people, reminded them in an awful manner of the wrath overhanging them as transgressors, and made them so afraid that they entreated and obtained the mediation of Moses between them and God, to typify their access to God as gracious, through the blood of the one Mediator. Then they received at once, through the mediation of Moses, direction as to the altar they would make, on which to present their burnt offerings and peace offerings;² and, in this fact, we have the beginning of that Levitical system soon after set up in the midst of them; to typify "the Son of God sent forth, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."³ Further, "the judgments" that Moses next communicated to them,⁴ were the first portion of the judicial or civil laws, given to regulate their conduct as citizens, the tendency of which was, to separate them from the society and ways of the heathen, and to bind them together as a well-ordered, prosperous, and happy community, typical of the state of all the redeemed of the earth under the Gospel, of whom Jesus said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."⁵

Here has to be noticed the *covenant* into which, through Moses, the people were brought with God, on the footing of the law just given, and afterwards given more fully. Before publishing His law, the LORD, by Moses, said to the people, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure

¹ Exod. xx. ; Matt. v.³ Gal. iv.⁵ John xvii.² Exod. xx.⁴ Exod. xxi.-xxiii.

unto me, above all people. . . . And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, an holy nation."¹ Accordingly, after the law was given from Sinai, "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and builded an altar, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and sprinkled half of the blood on the altar, and read the book of the covenant to the people, and received their promise of obedience, and sprinkled the blood on the people, as the blood of the covenant which the Lord had made with them;"² words, these, which lead us to see in them a representation of all whom Christ loves and washes from their sins in His own blood, and makes kings and priests unto God and His Father, makes a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar (a purchased) people."³ The covenant thus entered into between God and Israel was a *national* covenant, one which in respect of its distinctive character, and peculiar provisions, was of a temporary nature, and confined in its operations to the land of Canaan, and the children of Israel dwelling there. No doubt, it contained the great moral law of God, which, as broken by our first parents and all mankind, declares and leaves all under condemnation. It also, in its provisions, shadowed forth the salvation found only in Christ by faith, the salvation revealed in the announcement to our fallen parents, of the seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head, and again so impressively made known to Abraham, in the covenant of promise made with him, and sealed to him, when he received the good news of a seed of blessing for all nations from his loins. At the same time, it differed in its distinctive character from the broken law, or covenant of works, which speaks only of condemnation and the curse to all who continue, and are left, personally, to face its demands; and it differed from the everlasting cove-

¹ Exod. xix.² Exod. xxiv.³ Rev. i.; 1 Pet. ii.

nant of grace, in which alone all the saved, from the beginning to the end of time, find pardon and peace with God and restoration to that purity of heart and life that fits them for His service and presence. The peculiarity of the national covenant, made by God with Israel at the foot of Sinai, was its constituting the title by which they were to receive the land of Canaan as their inheritance, and remain in it in peace and prosperity. They were put in possession of it by God, and promised by Him to be kept in possession of it, not for their own earthly ends, but as a national church, a nation of worshippers of the living and true God. By His appointment, they had a tabernacle and then a temple as His habitation in the midst of them. They had one of the twelve tribes set apart wholly to the work of ministers of religion. They had to offer continually a vast number of animal sacrifices. They were placed under a great variety of laws, in reference to the outward legal uncleanness which they were ever ready to contract, and the outward ceremonial purifications from it, which they had to observe. And they were hedged in, by no end of ordinances and laws, that barred their intercourse with other nations, and required them to dwell alone.

Now, while they outwardly upheld these outward institutions and obeyed these outward laws, their outward safety and wellbeing in the land were preserved and continued by God, and wonders of power and mercy were wrought in their behalf. On the other hand, when, through earthliness and depravity, they neglected these ordinances, or even fell away, as they were constantly inclined to fall away, to the idolatries and abominations of the heathen around, and so incurred the forfeiture of the land,¹ that forfeiture was suspended or only partially put in force, in view of the Messiah's

¹ Mal. iv. 6.

coming, and until at length He came. At the same time, it is carefully to be noticed and remembered, that this national covenant made at Sinai, being, so far as its peculiar provisions were concerned, a merely outward and temporary covenant, the mere observance of *its* provisions alone, never secured the eternal salvation of any of the people, neither did their neglect of *its* provisions alone, cause their eternal condemnation. All who perished finally under it, perished as transgressors of the great moral law, which was and remains in force against all mankind in their natural state; and all who were saved under it, were saved by the same promised grace in Christ, which has saved and will continue to save all true believers, from the moment of the fall, till the end of time.

At the same time, the law given to Israel as the law of this their national covenant, was designed, and did not fail, to operate in subserviency to the covenant of grace in the case of all of the nation of Israel that were made, by grace, the true spiritual Israel of God. In their case, the outward institutions and ordinances under which they were placed served first to fill them with a sense of their sinfulness, and then to lead them to the experience of the great salvation that is in Christ. That implies that these ceremonies were figurative representations of His person and redeeming work. And so we find the matter plainly set forth in Scripture. *The tabernacle*, and then the temple, the dwelling-place of God in the midst of Israel,¹ typified "the Word made flesh, and dwelling among us,"² "the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in Christ Jesus."³ The brazen altar typified Christ, of whom it is said "we have an altar."⁴ The golden altar typified Christ, by the merits of whose intercession the prayers and praises of believers are presented with accept-

¹ Exod. xx. ; 1 Kings viii.

² John i.

³ Col. ii. ; Heb. ix.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 10.

ance before the throne.¹ The laver with water, at the door of the sanctuary, in which the priests habitually purified themselves for ministration at the altar,² typified the cleansing blood and purifying grace of Christ, by which alone believers are fitted for the service of God.³ The golden candlestick⁴ typified Christ as the Light of the world.⁵ The tables of shew-bread⁶ typified His fulness, out of which believers receive grace for grace.⁷ The entering of the high priest once a year into the holiest court of the tabernacle and temple with atoning blood,⁸ typified Christ, entering with His own blood into the holy place on high where God dwells, and where Christ now appears in the presence of God for us.⁹ And the ark of the covenant, containing the tables of the law or testimony, with the mercy-seat upon it, and the cherubim on the ends of the mercy-seat, stretching over it their wings, and the visible cloud of the glorious presence of God hovering above the mercy-seat,¹⁰ typified Christ, with the law of God in His heart, having in behalf of His redeemed, perfectly fulfilled all its requirements, set forth by God to be a propitiation through faith in His blood; in whom God is reconciling the world to Himself; so that having Him as the great High Priest over the house of God, we can come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.¹¹

Sacrificial blood the central reality of the law of Moses.

The access of the chosen people to God, as sin-forgiving and gracious, while holy and just, depended on their constant resort to the shedding of sacrificial blood, and on its application to His worshippers, and to the very vessels, and

¹ Rev. viii. 3 ;

Heb. xiii. 15.

² Exod. xxx.

³ Tit. iii. ; Eph. v.

⁴ Exod. xxv.

⁵ John viii.

⁶ Exod. xxv.

⁷ John i.

⁸ Lev. xvi.

⁹ Heb. ix.

¹⁰ Exod. xxv.

¹¹ Rom. iii. ;

2 Cor. v. ;

Heb. iv.

the whole of the things used in His service; all this typifying the necessity and efficacy of the blood of Christ, as constantly applied by the Holy Spirit to believers, to cleanse them from sin, and so preserve them in communion with God, and in fitness for His service. The constant shedding of this blood was the heart and centre of the religion of the Jews. Their priests were consecrated by blood;¹ and then continually employed in offering sacrifice for their own sins and the sins of the people.² The altar, reared by divine command,³ was set apart by atoning blood. On this altar, the sacrifices brought by the people, were offered by the priests continually.⁴ The people, by laying their hands on the heads of the sacrifices, transferred to them their own sins.⁵ The blood was sprinkled on the book of the law, to show that only through a constantly operative atonement, could the people, consistently with divine law, be kept in covenant with God. To make this truth more manifest, the blood was sprinkled on the people.⁶ For the same reason, it was sprinkled both on the tabernacle and on all the vessels of the ministry;⁷ since in this way only could the sanctuary and the vessels of it, be purged from the defilements which they suffered from the sinning worshippers, and so sanctified still for the service of the Holy One. For the same reason, in fact, almost all things under the law were purged by blood, and "without the shedding of blood there was no remission."⁸ As regarded the burnt-offerings, the sin-offerings, the trespass-offerings, and the peace-offerings,⁹ which were being continually brought to the altar; and also as regarded the laying of the hands of the offerers on the heads of the sacrifices, and the sprinkling of their blood round about the altar, and otherwise, as directed;

¹ Exod. xxix.; Lev. viii.² Heb. v.³ Exod. xxix.; Deut. xxvii.⁴ Heb. x.⁵ Lev. i., iii., iv., xvi.⁶ Heb. ix.⁷ Heb. ix.⁸ Heb. ix.⁹ Lev. i.-vi.

the one great lesson thus inculcated was, that the High and Holy One never could be approached by His people, being sinful creatures, except through the medium of atoning blood. Hence the daily morning and evening sacrifice,¹ the sacrifices for each weekly Sabbath, for the new moons, for Pentecost, for the feast of trumpets, and for the great yearly atonement;² and, in addition to all the stated sacrifices, the still greater number of sacrificial victims that were brought by individual worshippers as voluntary offerings.

To spiritually-minded and intelligent Israelites, however, it must have appeared that the mere blood of bulls and goats could not take away their sin;³ and that the sacrifices of the law were but a shadow of good things to come,⁴ the shadows of a higher sacrifice, in which they would at length disappear. So said Christ Himself prophetically, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, . . . burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required, . . . lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me."⁵ The virtue of these sacrifices wholly lay in their reference to Him who, in the end of the world, put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.⁶ And the permission to the High Priest alone, ever to enter the holiest court of the temple, and to him, to enter it only once in the year, viz., on the great day of atonement, and then to enter it, only by carrying the blood of the typical atonement, and sprinkling it seven times before the mercy seat,⁷ impressively taught that the way into the presence of God was not yet made manifest;⁸ and pointed to the new and living way of access, to be in due time opened up to God by the blood of Jesus Himself.⁹

The work of Christ as a priest, offering Himself a sacrifice, to satisfy divine justice, and to reconcile us to God, was

¹ Exod. xxviii.⁴ Heb. x.⁷ Heb. ix.² Exod. xxx.⁵ Ps. xl.⁸ Heb. ix.³ Heb. x.⁶ Heb. ix.⁹ Heb. x.

thus set forth from the beginning, and especially "in the law of Moses," in all the typical sacrifices by which alone God could be approached. Their language was, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" "Christ, by His own blood, entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."¹ And so, when God entered into covenant with the nation of Israel at Sinai, He required burnt-offerings to be offered, and peace-offerings to be sacrificed, and their blood, as "the blood of the covenant," to be sprinkled on the people, as well as on the altar, and on the book of the covenant.² They were thus taught that their life, forfeited by sin, could be regained only by laying their sin on the victims that bled and died in their stead, while at the same time reminded that the blood of these victims, having no virtue in itself to take away sin, could avail for their forgiveness and redemption, only as typical of "the blood of Jesus Christ," the Son of God, "which cleanseth from all sin."³

According to the view which we have given of the Mosaic institutions, they are, in reality, Christianity itself in symbol, type, and figure. The Jewish and Christian dispensations are essentially one. And the central truth of each is the redemption of men by a sufficient vicarious atonement.

The objection that our religion is a religion of blood.

Such as stand for this gospel of atonement, as the gospel of the Old Testament and of the New, are being tauntingly

¹ Heb. ix.

² Exod. xxiv.

³ 1 John i.

told that their religion is "a religion of blood." This reproach, rightly understood, is the glory of the gospel, as heaven's proclamation of peace on earth, from the fall of man, onward to the end of the world. This gospel of atonement was realised in the case of Abel, when he found the divine favour resting on him for the bloody sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock; just as the bloodless, and therefore worthless, religion of unitarians, deists, and "broad churchmen," has its proper type in the offering of Cain, who, as if he had no sin to confess and to be atoned for, presented to God, and was frowned upon for presenting merely the first fruits of the ground. Thus, ever since, as by the disobedience of their common head, all mankind were made sinners, and as salvation was to be found only in a promised Redeemer, true religion ever has been, and must continue to be, a religion of blood. That fact, rightly viewed, is its vital characteristic, its glory, its attractiveness, its majesty, its purity, its loveliness, its blessedness. Intelligent offerers from the beginning, in pouring out the life-blood of their sacrifices, acknowledged their own life forfeited by sin, and to be regained only by the sufferings of a substitute, by such sufferings as would satisfy offended justice, vindicate infinite holiness, fill them with the peace of forgiveness, free them from the pollution of sin, and fit them for the fellowship of God. True religion, as from the beginning a religion of blood, is the most effectual, the only effectual destroyer of moral evil, and the only efficient source of moral excellence in sinful men; inasmuch as, in its light, sin is seen in its sinfulness and shunned, and love to God and goodness is awakened and advanced in the hearts and lives of those who were strangers to all that is spiritually good before, until they attain a fitness as real, as their right in Christ is irrefragable, to take their place for ever before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Yes, it is a religion of blood. And as such it reveals the love of God the Father as it is nowhere else revealed. It reveals the love of God, as having so loved the world as to send into it His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. It reveals the love of God the Son, in taking our nature, and in offering His entire life on earth, in obedience and suffering, for our redemption; in rising from the grave; in ascending to heaven; in reigning over heaven, earth, and hell; and in pleading, as our advocate, with the Father; so as to gather to Himself, and to bring into His presence, all the ransomed from the earth. And it reveals the Holy Ghost as, in His equally infinite love, making known this salvation in everything said of it, in the word which He inspired; as coming on Christ without measure, to fit Him for His work, and to carry Him through it; and as ever moving up and down in the world, revealing the things of Christ to the minds of men, applying redemption to their souls, turning them into His eternal temples, and filling them with the fulness of God. Yes, it is a religion of blood. And being such, sinners who are made to understand it, and know themselves, take refuge under this blood, and are forgiven and cleansed from all their sins. By the obedience unto death rendered for them, they are made righteous, and find acceptance and favour with God. Under the power of the Spirit for which the shedding of that blood makes way, they die to sin and live to righteousness. Redeemed from the curse of the law by Him who, in the shedding of His blood, was made a curse for them, they receive the adoption of sons. They joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom they have received the reconciliation which His blood effects. By the cross of Christ the world is crucified to them, and they are crucified to the world. They are made willing to suffer with Christ on earth, that they may reign with Him in

heaven. They overcome all their enemies by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of His testimony. And under the shelter of the blood, by which Christ Himself entered into the holy place, they enter after Him. Yes, it is a religion of blood, and woe shall betide all who live and die away from the shelter which that blood affords. For to all such there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.

Spiritual effects of the truths as revealed to Moses.

A proof and an illustration of how the truth as it is in Jesus, and the power of His grace wrought in and through the Mosaic dispensation, are furnished in the *personal character of Moses himself, and of the generation trained by him in the wilderness.*

First, The personal character of Moses evidences the nature and power of the truth revealed to him. Moses, whose appearance from his birth seems to have made the impression of a high destiny being before him, having been providentially adopted by Pharaoh's daughter as her son, was trained in all the wisdom of Egypt, as well as in all the refinement of its court: while he was by his parents not less carefully filled with the higher knowledge and more ennobling spirit of the revelations made to his forefathers. When, at the age of forty years, he had to choose between the earthly grandeur within his reach, and the lot of his countrymen, at the time reduced to cruel bondage, "he refused" longer "to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense

of the reward."¹ Having had to flee from Egypt into Midian, he lived there, as a shepherd, for other forty years, as a stranger in a strange land, looking to God as his help, and undergoing the humbling, purifying, elevating discipline which prepared him for what followed. He then found himself at length in the presence of Christ, the Jehovah-Angel, speaking to him from the midst of the burning bush in Horeb, and received the commission which, with a strong feeling of his own insufficiency, but with a lively trust in divine strength, he went to Egypt, and executed. By faith he not only forsook Egypt, but put himself at the head of his nation, and led them out of it, "not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible;" "through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them." And then, having "by faith passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land," the people received from him a song, in which to celebrate the praises of God their Saviour. At the Mount of Sinai, and in the midst of awful manifestations of divine glory, he was brought into such close and long-continued communion with God, as implied, on the part of Moses, extraordinary depth of spiritual life, and strength and clearness of spiritual vision: and again, as he stood in the cleft of the rock, he had such a sight of the glory of Jehovah, while it passed by, and so heard His voice proclaiming Himself the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, as to be filled with a faith which wrought by love, purified his heart, and overcame the trials that beset him throughout all his life. The prayerful calmness and ease with which he crushed the enemies of Israel in the wilderness; the patience with which he bore his people's provocations; the zeal for the LORD'S honour with which he

¹ Heb. xi.

repressed and punished their rebellions; the disinterested entreaties which he poured out for their forgiveness and for the LORD'S continued favour to them; the pity and tender care which he had for their wants and weaknesses; and the persevering faithfulness with which he trained them to fear and serve the Lord, both such of them as had to die in the desert, and those who were to enter the land of Canaan—these and such like characteristics of Moses, evidence him to have been eminently one of those of whom it is written, "they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."¹ He was indeed taught emphatically that only by grace he could stand; for the murmurers for water having tempted him to speak unadvisedly with his lips, he was himself shut out of Canaan. But not the less truly was grace made sufficient for him, and divine strength made perfect in his weakness.

At length, at the termination of their wanderings and of his own life, in the midst of the nation assembled on the plains of Moab, within sight of Canaan, and with only the Jordan between it and them, and with his own eye turning to the heavenly Canaan to which he was so near, his remaining intercourse was a fitting conclusion of his ministry, and a fitting introduction to their future. In the final services which he then rendered, his character shines out like the sun that having from its morning dawn, and in its pathway through the heavens, broken out in its brightness, through the clouds that sought to conceal its brilliance, at evening sets in unmingled and surpassing glory. As we learn from Deuteronomy, he rehearsed their past history—repeated, in some instances in more or less altered forms, suited to their then position, the laws already given to them—and proclaimed their obligations, and the eventualities for good

¹ 1 Cor. x.

or evil before them, the blessings or curses that would rest on their obedience or disobedience—and then instructed them to engrave on stones, for a lasting testimony, these blessings and curses, and also to pronounce them aloud, in the ears of all; the blessings on Mount Gerizim, and the curses on Mount Ebal. In the course of the utterances that flowed from his lips, his soul was wrought up into passionate earnestness, till he was all on fire, with love to God and to His law, and with the deepest affection and pity for His people, as he foresaw how they would forget the good and incur the evil set before them. As the most effectual way of giving vent to his feelings, and of perpetuating the impression which he longed to make, he embodied them in a song, replete with instruction, admonition, and encouragement, to be sung by the nation, and so to keep in their remembrance the blessing and cursing, the life and death, which he had set before them, when they should see his face and hear his voice no more. One thing more, and his work was done. With the prophetic eye of a dying seer, he proclaimed the future of the nation, tribe by tribe; and in figurative language, foretold as the happiness of the upright, that they would have "the eternal God" as "their refuge," and "underneath" them "the everlasting arms." And then, while yet "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated," ascending Mount Nebo, and from the top of the crag Pisgah glancing back on the people and the land behind him, while the body which he dropped was laid by the LORD in a grave known only to Himself, his spirit with piercing gaze and soaring flight passed into the midst of the heavenly glory.

"The prophet like unto Moses."

In regard to the *character* of Moses, enough has been said to show that its source was the presence of the Divine

Redeemer accompanying him, and the Spirit of Christ working in and with him. Evidence has already been given of that truth. But there is one fact in the history of Moses specially bearing on this matter, to which we may allude. He received a revelation of "a prophet like unto himself," to be "raised up" by "the Lord his God" in the appointed time, to whom the people were to be required, under very solemn liabilities, to hearken.¹ That prophet was Christ Himself.² The revelation of the coming prophet had been made to him at Sinai, nearly forty years before he mentioned the fact. It was made to him when, at the people's request and by divine appointment, Moses was made a mediator between Jehovah and the people, who were afraid of His glory, and of direct communication with Him. Though Moses had kept this revelation to himself for nearly forty years, no one can reasonably doubt that it bulked largely in his mind's eye all through that period, and had a great influence over his life. For, according to the pre-intimation received by him, while THE prophet promised would be *like to himself*, that is, would be in intimate fellowship with God, face to face with Him—would be a performer of mighty signs and wonders—would see into and foretell the future—would be the great Teacher and Light of the world—would be the promulgator of new and all-authoritative laws—would act as a priest—and would be a great King—would be, in these respects, like unto Moses; it was plainly declared further that he would be One greater than himself. It was declared that having the words of the LORD put into His mouth, He would speak all the Lord commanded Him, that is, have *further* and *higher revelations* to make than even those by Moses—that He would also speak with *more authority*; this being implied in the threatening against all who would

¹ Deut. xviii.

² Acts iii., vii.

not hearken to His words—that He would be THE revealer of God to men, the Mediator between God and us—and that His coming would be the signal for the greatest of His forerunners to decrease, that He might increase. The words, in short, pointed to the truth so emphatically taught in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that while no mere human prophet equal to Moses ever arose in Israel,¹ Moses himself was after all but a servant in the house, while the promised prophet had proved to be the Son of God over it, and He to whom indeed the house belonged. To what extent Moses realised what was implied in his words we cannot determine; for we know that the prophets, having, under the Spirit, given forth their predictive testimony to Christ, had to search diligently into the signification of their own utterances. But this the whole history of Moses makes plain, even that he was filled with grace out of the fulness of Christ, and, in a higher degree than most men, reflected His image.

Second. A word as to the *effect* produced, *spiritually* and *practically*, on the *children of Israel*, by the dispensation under which they were thus placed. Did they to any extent, in any measure, confirm, by their life, the doctrine that this dispensation rightly improved was to form them to a character, identical with that to which believers are now formed by the truth and grace of Christ? The answer is, that what the dispensation introduced by Moses accomplished eminently in his own case, it accomplished, though of course in a less degree, in a greater or smaller number of the people. This is the conclusion to be drawn from what we read of the spirit and conduct of the second generation, the generation that grew up in the wilderness, and survived their abode in it, and entered Canaan, and took possession of it under Joshua. No doubt they were not perfect. That was mani-

¹ Deut. xxxiv.

fest from the manner in which many of them were tempted by the Moabites and Midianites to impurity and idol-worship. But the readiness with which, at the divine call, a body of armed men, formed of contingents from all the tribes, went and avenged on the Midianites the insulted honour of Jehovah, showed how comparatively sound at heart the nation had for the time become. On their return, too, they at once submitted to have themselves, and the numerous spoils of their conquest, purified according to law, and to have the spoil distributed with a due proportion for the priests and Levites, and for the service of the LORD at the tabernacle.¹ Then the two tribes of Gad and Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh, having secured the land of Gilead and the neighbouring region for their inheritance, instead of trying to remain there, and leave to the other tribes to cross the Jordan, and fight their own way to their respective allotments, arranged for leaving their families with their cattle behind them, that they might, according to their promise, accompany their brethren, and fight side by side with them, until they had conquered and taken possession of their appointed inheritance. So that when Joshua, after Moses' death, reminded these two and a half tribes of their promise and their duty, their instant answer was, "All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee; only the Lord thy God be with thee as He was with Moses. Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death; only be strong, and of a good courage."² Further, the twelve tribes having deliberately crossed the Jordan, instead of at once rushing

¹ Num. xxxi.

² Josh. i.

to battle and to victory, submitted to be consecrated to God by undergoing the rite of circumcision, and remaining in their tents till they were whole. They next observed with calmness and solemnity the feast of the passover. Even after this, instead of then demanding to be led at once against the enemy, they were required to take the first and strongly-walled town of Jericho, to which they were nigh, by a procedure, which made nothing of their prowess, and everything of their faith in God. They were required to wear their arms unused, and to walk in quietness round that city daily, following the priests as they blew their rams' horns, and to make this procession once daily for seven days, and on the seventh to repeat this idle-looking march seven times. And they did so, and did it undoubtedly with the expectation of what followed: for when, by divine command, they finished this whole proceeding with a tremendous shout, the walls of Jericho fell flat before them, and all that it contained became at once an easy prey. If the sin of Achan, in coveting and secreting for himself an attractive portion of the spoil, which God had commanded to be wholly destroyed, as an act of homage to Himself, if that sin arrested all further success, and at once subjected them to nothing but reverses, till it was detected and punished, there was one consolation connected with it; it brought out the fact that his sin was the only sin of the kind committed, amidst the spoils that had fallen into their hands, and thus proved the single-eyed uprightness that, for the time being, so generally animated the tribes.

The same spirit they seem to have carried with them in the successive conquests by which they possessed themselves of so large a portion of the land. And when at length the Reubenites, being honourably dismissed to their homes on the other side of Jordan, had reached the point of crossing, and erected on its banks an altar of witness, to testify that

they remained an integral part of the chosen nation, though in their separated homes; the conduct of the other tribes on hearing of this act, in rising up against them as if they meant, in opposition to the law of Jehovah, to have an altar of sacrifice of their own; and then the conduct of the accused, in carefully and earnestly freeing themselves from all suspicion; and the further conduct again of the other tribes in at once carefully and joyfully accepting the explanation; all combine, with the other facts we have mentioned, to prove the faith and faithfulness of that generation, and to show that there are good grounds for the affirmation, that on the whole it was probably the best, morally and spiritually, of all the generations of Israel. And this is just what the Lord Himself said of it long afterwards, by the prophet Jeremiah, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of His increase."¹

¹ Jer. ii.

VI.

CHRIST "IN THE PROPHETS."

"All things must be fulfilled which were written in . . . the PROPHETS . . . concerning me."—LUKE xxiv. 44.

TO raise sinful men into a redeemed, regenerated, sanctified condition, is, so far as they are concerned, necessarily the great design of any revelation which God makes of Himself.

This, therefore, was the purpose of God in the dispensation which Moses was employed to establish among the children of Israel.¹ The moral law showed to them their transgressions. The ceremonial law of animal sacrifices and outward cleansings, continually set forth, in type and figure, the atonement for their sins, and the divine purification that their hearts and lives required. The constant calls to them on this ground, and in this manner, to come to God, and to devote themselves to His service, implied that in the exercise of faith in God, as thus approached with acceptance, and in the exercise of love to Him for His love to them as thus become their God and Redeemer, they were to live before Him in holy and new obedience.

At the same time the figurative rites of the Mosaic economy being preparatory to the clear and final dispensation of grace to be established by the personal ministry of the Son of God incarnate, all spiritually-minded believing Israelites found the virtue of their existing outward privileges to flow from looking forward in faith to the coming

¹ Isa. v.

Messiah, and the coming redemption. In the exercise of this faith, they found peace with God, and obtained from Him grace and strength to serve Him.

But a holy life like this was not natural to the children of Israel, any more than it has ever been to any other of the sons of men. They had in them the carnal mind which is enmity against God, and is not subject to His law, neither, indeed, can be. And they showed this continually, and often, indeed, in the saddest possible excesses, throughout their whole history; in all manner of ungodliness, unrighteousness, and profligacy. They trampled under foot the commandments of the moral law. They withheld the appointed sacrifices and offerings, or they offered the lame and blind of their flocks. Often when they did bring any of the gifts commanded, they made a virtue of their scanty and heartless services, looking to nothing beyond *them*, and making *them* a substitute for judgment, mercy, and faith. More frequently they forsook the worship of God altogether, and took up with the superstitious and abominable ways of their heathen neighbours, and became mad upon their idols, finding, in such practices, what was as suited to their depraved tastes and habits, as the service of the Holy One was contrary.

The work of the prophets was therefore divinely directed to meet the ways of the nation, the ways of all classes, of rulers and ruled, of high and low, of priests and people; while their work was also regulated by the divine purpose to bring the Mosaic economy to an end, in the establishment of that to which it was ever meant to be subservient, viz., the dispensation of the gospel of Christ. These observations may prepare us for understanding what is included in the testimony to Christ contained in the inspired books here denominated "the prophets."

The title of "the prophets," as used by our Lord in the words before us, includes such historical books as Joshua,

Judges, Kings, and Chronicles; as well as the books of moral and spiritual instruction, and of predictive utterances, that in our English Bibles begin with Isaiah and end with Malachi. Consider—

I. The testimony to Christ in the historical books, in the history which they contain of the nation of Israel.

The generation that under Joshua took possession of Canaan was, as already stated, probably the best of all the generations of Israel. They commenced their existence in the land by observing circumcision as the seal of their covenant to be the LORD'S, and next by observing the passover as the seal of His promise to protect and strengthen them for His service; these ordinances prefiguring the state of those who are circumcised in their hearts by the Spirit of Christ, and who live on His sacrifice as the source of their peace, and the nourishment of their spiritual life. More noticeably still, when Joshua was about to begin the work before him, he had a vision that impressively told him in whom his and his people's help would be found. When near Jericho, there appeared to him "a man with a drawn sword," who, in answer to Joshua's inquiries, told him that he had "come as captain of the host of the Lord," and required him to loose his shoes from off his feet, because in virtue of HIS presence, who was now speaking to him, "the place whereon he stood was holy ground." Then as Jehovah, He said He had "given into Joshua's hand, Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour."¹ The Jehovah, Captain of the host of Jehovah, of whom Joshua had this vision, is He whom Isaiah foretells as "the Leader and Commander of the people,"² and whom the apostle describes as "the Captain of our salvation,"³ that is, our Lord Jesus Christ. As his name, which means Saviour, indicated, Joshua was a type of Jesus,

¹ Josh. v., vi.

² Isa. lv.

³ Heb. ii.

the Saviour of the world. He had in him the Spirit, that is, the Spirit of Christ; ¹ and the book that bears his name, abundantly proves that, in the conquest of the land, he acted throughout in the spirit of prayerful dependence on the LORD, while it is equally evident that the people, under the divine hand upon them, had been wonderfully respectful to his authority, and obedient to his will. ² Moreover, while the tabernacle in which THE LORD specially dwelt had been set up in Shiloh, the jealousy of the tribes, their outbursting zeal for the altar of the Lord before His tabernacle, and the corresponding earnestness of the two tribes and a half in freeing themselves of all suspicion of any thought of dishonouring the altar or the Lord, by the mere memorial altar, or altar of witness, which they erected at the border of Jordan, when about to cross it on their homeward way, indicate that the law of Moses was in effective operation, and receiving the homage of the people. ³ And the readiness and even apparently tender feelings with which they entered into the covenant made with them by Joshua, when old and soon to die, manifest that it was then their purpose and resolution to serve the Lord. ⁴

Declensions and divine dealings.

Beginning their national existence in the land so promisingly, the children of Israel continued to run well for a time, although, alas! only for a short time. "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that He had done for Israel;" ⁵ but the book of Judges which contains a summary history of them for about three hundred years, sadly proves how soon they deteriorated, and how they continued to backslide. When they had conquered enough of Canaan to supply their wants,

¹ Num. xxvii.

² Josh. xxii., xxiv.

³ Josh. xxii.

⁴ Josh. xxiv.

⁵ Josh. xxiv.

instead of clearing the country of its doomed inhabitants according to the divine command, they began to slacken in their appointed work, and to prefer their ease and self-indulgence to continued exertion and conquest. They allowed the surviving portion of the Canaanites to remain, while making them tributary. As might have been expected and was indeed foretold, they soon formed alliances with them, and soon learned to serve their idol-gods, and to practise their wicked ways. They thus provoked the Lord, generation after generation, and, as they were forewarned, He gave them into their enemies' hands often for lengthened periods; and when they were reduced to the utmost misery, and groaned under it, and again cried to the Lord, He pitied their wretchedness time after time, and raised up judges one after another at successive periods, by whose agency they were rescued again and again, and restored to a measure of their former privileges, but only to backslide and be punished anew, and then to be sooner or later delivered again.

Gracious interpositions.

In the course of these dark ages of Israel's history, God did not leave Himself without witnesses to His power and grace, as is evidenced, for instance, in the cases of Naomi, and Ruth, and Boaz; and while the divine presence of the LORD was made known, again and again, to the faith, if not to the vision, of His servants whom He raised up in succession to save the commonwealth of Israel from utter wreck, at times He made His presence most impressively and mercifully manifest. Thus at the time when Israel had been for years utterly impoverished by the Midianites, Gideon was raised up to work for them, by his faith, a signal deliverance, and the commission for that end which he received, was from the same divine Redeemer whom we have so often met with in the past history of His dealings,

and who, in the account of his converse with Gideon, is spoken of in such a manner, that the Angel of the LORD speaking to Gideon, and the LORD Himself speaking to him, are, in the narrative, identified, and the several utterances are found to be those of *the same* divine person.¹ At a future period of these dark ages, when the Israelites had so multiplied their offences, and hardened themselves in depravity, that the LORD left them in the hands of the Philistines for forty years; a mighty deliverer was to be raised up in the person of Samson, who seems, in his own person, to have embodied both the corruption of the period, and the grace that alone could save from it; and the announcement of his birth was made to his parents in the following manner. A person visits them who is called in the inspired record, "the angel of the Lord," "a man of God" with "a countenance like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible." On Manoah asking his name, the reply was, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is *secret*?" the word translated "secret" being the same word that in Isaiah ix. is rendered "WONDERFUL," where it is applied among other divine names to Christ as God incarnate. Accordingly when Manoah laid a sacrifice before Him, He kindled the fire which consumed it, and ascended in the midst of the flame to heaven. "And Manoah said, We shall surely die, because we *have seen God*. But his wife said unto him, If *Jehovah* were pleased to kill us, HE would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands,"² &c. From the tyranny of the Philistines, who in his day were the chief oppressors of his country, Samson was the main instrument of its deliverance, both while he lived and in his death. But the country had become full of anarchy and wickedness; and though Samuel, the last and best of

¹ Judges vi.² Judges xiii.

the judges, was at that period raised up, by a long life of wise, energetic, and upright administration of the nation's interests, to arrest temporarily the workings of the deep-seated wide-spread corruption that prevailed, too evidently centuries of disobedience to the divine will and of consequent miseries, had abundantly proved that the people had not, and would not seek after, such a feeling of Jehovah's presence as *their* king and ruler, as well as their God, and would not cultivate such intelligent and holy self-denial and self-control, as their republican form of government specially required, to render it a successful one, and as might have made them, under God, a thoroughly well-ordered and happy commonwealth.

Change of government to a monarchy.

The turning of the nation into a kingdom governed by an earthly king, like other nations, had become their demand; and it was divinely granted, in the first place, to punish them for the ungodly spirit in which they made the demand, by placing over them an unhappy monarch in the person of Saul. But this change in the form of their government was arranged for far higher, infinitely higher ends, by God, even that in addition to all the other prefigurations which the Mosaic law and institutions presented of Christ and His church, the kingship and kingdom established in Israel might furnish new and impressive foreshadowings of the coming Messiah and of His spiritual reign. That Samuel's long and faithful ministry was to lead to this glorious consummation, was predicted in the inspired song of his mother, when devoting him to the service of God in the temple; "The LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed."¹ So

¹ 1 Sam. ii.

far as the outward typical consummation here predicted was concerned, it was attained conspicuously in the monarchy, first of David, and then of Solomon, and after that, in the perpetuated exercise or right of sovereignty in the house of David, till Messiah came. But the antitypical consummation was realised only in Christ and His kingdom. The prophet foretells, accordingly, a child born and a Son given, whose "name is the Mighty God the Prince of Peace," of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, "sitting upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever."¹ Manifestly, with reference to that finally perfected spiritual state of things on earth under Christ, and to the Messiah being, as to His human nature, of the seed of David, did Nathan bring this message from THE LORD to David, after he had brought up the ark with rejoicing to its place in Zion, "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."² And so evidently did David realise his subjugation of all his enemies, and all the internal order and prosperity of his kingdom, to be subservient to these infinitely higher interests, that, keeping these interests in view, he wished to build a proper temple for the worship of Jehovah; and, when prevented, he collected materials exceeding great and precious for its erection by Solomon; he also penned psalms that will continue to be the vehicle of the highest and holiest praises heard in the Church on earth, even until the kingdom of grace has passed into the kingdom of glory; and, besides giving directions, as well as providing materials, for the building of an house for God to dwell in, and framing regulations for the work of the

¹ Isa. ix.

² 2 Sam. vii.

Levites and priests, he introduced for the first time an elaborate service of song, and set apart a body of Levites for its maintenance, so as to secure the constant upholding of a complete and impressive system of ordinances of worship in the temple on Zion.¹ The last days of David were suitably spent in this blessed work—in magnifying the Lord, for the ability and willingness to contribute to it which he found in himself, and which was manifested by all classes of his people—in solemnly committing the whole work into the hands of Solomon, with earnest prayers in his behalf—and in then offering thousands of sacrifices, with drink-offerings. And the whole was crowned by all the congregation blessing the Lord God of their fathers, bowing down their heads in the worship of *Jehovah*, and in offering obeisance to their aged king, and then eating and drinking on that day with great gladness.² And the actual accomplishment of this work was the crowning honour put upon Solomon, when he "sat on the throne of the Lord as king, instead of David his father," and "the Lord magnified him exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel."³ All the glory that accrued to him from the greatness of his wisdom, and the temporal prosperity of his kingdom, was eclipsed by the honour put upon Solomon when he was divinely employed to build so magnificent a temple for *Jehovah*—when, the ark being placed in it, the Lord immediately filled it with His glory—when, with prayers and supplications and thanksgivings, so full of the Spirit of God, he dedicated it, in the midst of the tens of thousands of sacrifices with which king and people consecrated themselves along with the temple, to the Lord God of Israel⁴—and when *Jehovah* appeared to him that night, and employed

¹ 1 Chron. xxi.-xxvi.

² 2 Chron. xxviii., xxix.

³ 1 Chron. xxix.

⁴ 1 Kings viii.; 2 Chron. v., vi.

such great and precious promises to secure steadfastness in His service, as well as such solemn threatenings to deter both king and people from apostasy.¹

Thus, in connection with the occupancy of the throne, first by David and then by Solomon after him, a more definite revelation than ever was given respecting the promised Messiah. To our first parents the promise was given of Christ as the seed of the woman that would bruise the serpent's head. That promise was carried forward to its fulfilment in the line of Seth the son of Adam, and Enoch, and Noah, and then in the line of Shem the son of Noah, to Abraham, and then in the line of Isaac and Jacob and of Judah. And at length it is revealed to David that, in the line of the sovereign descent from him, the Messiah would take his human nature, and so be the son of David while at the same time his Lord.² The very land in which the house of David reigned was *Immanuel's* land;³ that is, belonged to Christ as Immanuel, God with us.⁴ The temple, with the divine glory visible abiding in it, was the type of His body,⁵ in which "the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily."⁶ The nation from the outset was "a kingdom of priests;" that is, of sacred persons, or of people separated from all other nations, and outwardly consecrated to God, as typical of all the redeemed of Christ, who, however scattered among other people, are a holy nation of "kings and priests to God."⁷ And now at length the children of Israel are formed into a kingdom, under a race of kings, all of them necessarily in direct lineal descent from David, with the express announcement that this form of their government and constitution as a nation would not be changed, would continue as the only divine arrangement for them, until it terminated in Messiah's coming, and kingdom, and reign.

¹ 2 Chron. vii.

² Ps. cxxxii, cx.; Matt. xxii.

³ Isa. vii. and viii.

⁴ Matt. i.

⁵ John ii.

⁶ Col. ii.

⁷ Rev. i.; 1 Pet. ii.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice on the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.¹

Indications of a spiritual consummation in Christ.

Many things in the history of the children of Israel, plainly indicated that their whole national constitution and the workings of it, were but introductory to another and higher state of things, under the promised and coming Messiah. The promise to Abraham that in his seed all nations should be blessed, pointed to higher and more extended privileges than those that were assigned to Israel apart from all the nations of the world and that were in fact confined to the land of Canaan. The very nature of their religious rites, as outward material observances, could give no peace to the conscience, or moral purity to the heart, except by leading the worshippers in faith to look beyond them to the divine redemption and grace which they shadowed forth; and that fact, in connection with the constantly remembered and renewed predictions of the Messiah and His salvation, compelled them, if they had any spiritual discernment at all, to see that their religious system was changeable and in time would wax old and vanish away. And when at length they were formed into a kingdom under David and Solomon, glorious as that kingdom became, under these, its two first divinely chosen monarchs, the history of it soon furnished additional proof that it was but a new form of their typical character as a nation, destined to figure forth, and then disappear in, the coming Messiah's reign. For after quickly rising to such a state

¹ Jer. xxiii.

of glory in the reigns of David and Solomon, it broke into two halves in the reign of Solomon's son, two tribes remaining with him, and the other tribes setting up as an independent kingdom; a kingdom the inhabitants of which, after describing an unhappy history under wicked monarchs, were swept into captivity, and disappeared and were lost among the nations of heathenism. The two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, from the period of the separation of the other tribes, constituted henceforth the kingdom that contained the privileges and promises of the then kingdom of God. But even its history was a history of evils that foretold its decay and dissolution; while God's dealings with it in His providence, and by His prophets, afforded continually increasing evidence that it was preserved from dissolution, age after age, only because the Saviour of the world was to be born as one of its royal house and lineage, and because its ordinances, amidst all the corruptions beneath which they were buried, were still the divinely-appointed means of raising up and perpetuating in the land a remnant according to the election of grace, a remnant of "Israelites indeed," like Elizabeth, and Zecharias, and Mary, and Simeon, and Anna, to welcome the Messiah when He came.

And this view of the state of things will prepare us for noticing the call of the prophets to their work, the way in which they performed it, and the direct, formal testimony which they gave to Christ. Consider—

II. The testimony to Christ in the books of moral and spiritual instruction, and of predictive utterances that are more commonly spoken of as the books of the prophets.

1. The call of the prophets to their more special work as inspired teachers.

It was from the Lord as dwelling in His temple on Zion, and as from His temple putting forth His power over His

people and over all nations, that all mercy and all judgment proceeded. "Thou that dwellest between the cherubim shine forth, stir up Thy strength and come and save us."¹ The judgment of God on His and His people's enemies, was "the vengeance of His temple."² The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: He sitteth between the cherubim; let the earth be moved. The Lord is great in Zion, and He is high above all the people.³ From the midst of the glory in which He dwelt and reigned in His sanctuary, He called Samuel to his work as a prophet.⁴ All the prophets were similarly commissioned.⁵ But that Christ is the LORD who thus dwelt between the cherubim, and reigned over Israel and over the nations, is evident from these facts among others, viz., that the "glory of the Lord sitting on His throne in the temple, high and lifted up," as seen by Isaiah,⁶ was, according to the express declaration of John, the glory of Christ;⁷ and that the prediction by Malachi, of a messenger sent to prepare the way before *the Lord*, and of THE LORD suddenly coming to His temple, even the messenger (angel) of the covenant,⁸ is expressly declared by Mark⁹ to have been fulfilled in the work of John the Baptist, and the coming of Jesus Christ to claim the temple as His own. From Him, therefore, the prophets received their commission. Hence the following facts in connection with their becoming qualified to execute their commission.

First, They had discoveries of the glory of Christ, to humble them under a sense of their unworthiness, to show them and lead them to seek the spiritual cleansing that alone could fit them for His service, and to render them at once humble, trustful, and firm in performing their duties. Jeremiah, though sanctified from the womb, was so oppressed

¹ Ps. lxxx.² Jer. l., li.³ Ps. xcix.⁴ 1 Sam. iii.⁵ Jer. vii. 25.⁶ Isa. vi.⁷ John xii.⁸ Mal. iii.⁹ Mark i.

with a sense of his unfitness for his work, that the Lord put forth His hand and touched his mouth, and filled it with words, and made him strong with His felt presence.¹ Ezekiel had a vision of a firmament of glory, above which was the likeness of a throne, and on the throne was one with "the appearance of a man," and before this glory, he fell upon his face, and was then set upon his feet, by the Spirit entering into him, and strengthening him to receive, and go and deliver the divine messages to the rebellious Jews.² At the side of the river Hiddekel, Daniel had a vision of "a certain *man* clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body also was like the beryl, His face as the appearance of lightning, and His eyes as lamps of fire, and His arms and feet like in colour to polished brass, and the words of His voice like the voice of a multitude." When seeing the vision, Daniel quaked greatly, felt his strength gone, and his comeliness turned into corruption, and lay unconscious on the ground, till a hand was laid on him and raised him up, and touched his lips, and opened his mouth, and gave him strength.³ Isaiah's vision of THE LORD,⁴ which John declares⁵ was a vision of the glory of Christ, filled the prophet with an overwhelming sense of his uncleanness; which was taken away by a seraphim taking a live coal from off the altar, instinct with the atoning blood of sacrifice, and applying it to the prophet's lips, and so taking away his iniquity, and purging his sin, as to render him fit and ready to go and deliver with firmness the Lord's messages of judgment to His rebellious countrymen. Such modes of preparing the prophets for their work, represented figuratively the cleansing blood and sanctifying grace of Christ, by which alone sinful men have ever been prepared for the service of God. The men who

¹ Jer. i.² Ezek. i.³ Dan. x.⁴ Isa. vi.⁵ John xii.

were employed in this prophetic work were thus prepared by being made, in their personal character, "holy men of God."¹

Second, Thus prepared, they "spake not by the will of man," not as out of their own mind merely, nor as directed by, or in order to please, high or low, rulers or ruled around them, but only "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."²

Third, The Holy Ghost, by whom they were moved, is declared to be "the Spirit of Christ which was in them."³

Fourth, And the chief theme of their utterances was the redemption we have in Christ through His blood. "Of which salvation the prophets inquired and searched diligently, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."⁴

2. With this as the main end in view, so far as the divine purpose was concerned, the ministry of the prophets naturally and necessarily fell into two parts.

(1.) In dealing with all classes, they were led, with great force and faithfulness, to vindicate the everlasting principles and interests of truth and righteousness. They exposed and denounced the ungodliness and impiety, the idolatries, the fraud and falsehood, the injustice and oppression, and the endless moral impurities and excesses that prevailed; they proclaimed the wrath of God against all this wickedness; they declared all the miseries of the nation to have flowed from their transgressions and sins; they called the nation to repentance, to confession, to humiliation, to a thorough reformation of their hearts and lives; they held forth mercy only to such as forsook their wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts; they rebuked both the neglect of outward ordinances as of no avail, and the dependence placed on them as

¹ 2 Pet. i.

² 2 Pet. i.

³ 1 Pet. i.

⁴ 1 Pet. i.

if they were everything, as if the mere outward observance of them would suffice as a substitute for faith in the spiritual realities which they shadowed forth, and for the spiritual life which, by the blessing of the Spirit of God on the proper use of them, they were meant and did not fail to beget and nourish. Only in connection with the triumph of such high spiritual truths could deliverance be found by the nation from its degradation and miseries. Only in their triumph would the enemies of Israel be swept from around them, and overtaken by the destruction for which they had prepared themselves.

(2.) While on these grounds immediate reformation was called for and corresponding blessedness was promised, the triumph, the thorough triumph of these principles was to be expected only when the Messiah appeared, for then a King would indeed reign in righteousness, and princes would rule in judgment, and the Spirit would be poured out from on high, and the work of righteousness would be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.¹ To that coming of the Messiah, therefore, the prophets had their own eyes turned by the Spirit of Christ in them, and sought to turn the eyes of the people. And this prospect was thus held forth, not to make them forget immediate duties in vague and uninfluential and distracting anticipations, but rather from the very nature of the predicted results of the Messiah's appearing, to make the prospect react with enlightening, spiritualising, sanctifying, and comforting power on their whole character and conduct from day to day. This influence from what is expected, is a kind of influence which is still as operative and as important as ever, and will indeed continue so till time is swallowed up in eternity. The prospect of what is before them is still

¹ Isa. xxxii.

the life of believers for the present. Christians live upon the future. They are "saved by hope." So was it, in some respects still more was it so, with the prophets, and all of their own time who believed and profited by their teaching. The brightness that shone upon them from the future furnished the light in which they sought to walk, and walking in which they found both an outward blessing from the Lord and inward peace. Yea, it was the presence of Christ that they had with them in the visible cloud in which Jehovah dwelt, it was His Spirit that was in them, and by whom their minds were divinely directed to the coming deliverer; and so no end of particulars is found in their utterances with reference to His power and work. Let us glance at some of them.

Predictions of the Prophets with reference to Christ.

Jonah's consignment to, and deliverance from, the fish's belly, foreshadowed Christ's lying in the grave, and His rising again.

Joel foretold the outpouring of the Spirit by Christ, the judgments that He will inflict on His enemies, and the peaceful prosperous state to which He will at length raise His church.

Amos, after depicting the ruin about to overtake the kingdoms both of Israel and Judah, as well as the nations around, predicted the blessings to be bestowed on Jew and Gentile under the Messiah's reign.

Hosea proclaimed for many years in Israel, God's controversy with the ten tribes for their idolatrous forsaking of Him, and their abounding iniquities and crimes, and the destruction which they were bringing on their own heads, and also the wrath coming on the princes and people of Judah for their impiety and unrighteousness; but he also took refuge and sought comfort in the future when the people would seek the Lord their God, and David (*i.e.*,

Christ) their king¹—when He would call His Son out of Egypt,² and redeem His people from the grave, and swallow up death in victory.³

The book of *Isaiah* contains reiterated exposures of the hypocrisy and manifold transgressions and iniquities of his own people, of threatenings of the divine judgments which they were bringing on themselves,—and of calls to forsake their wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts, and to return to the Lord for mercy and abundant pardon,—and also of predictions of the overthrow in the Lord's own time of all the hostile nations of the Gentiles. But intermingled with all these utterances, there are, throughout the book, such clear and impressive representations of the character, offices, and work of Messiah, as render this book more like a history of Christ after He had come, than a series of prophecies concerning Him, uttered between seven and eight hundred years before His advent. The following, among others, are parts of Isaiah's visions and utterances. All nations flowing to the house of the Lord to be taught His ways and to walk in His paths⁴—the Branch of the Lord, beautiful and glorious; the filth of the daughters of Zion washed away; all that remain in Zion and Jerusalem living and holy; a cloud of smoke by day and of fire by night on every dwelling and solemn assembly;⁵—Jehovah on his temple throne in His revealed glory (which John declares was the glory of Christ⁶); purifying the uncleanness of the prophet by a live coal from the altar, the emblem of the blood of sprinkling applied by the Holy Spirit;⁷—a virgin bearing a Son whose name is Emmanuel, God with us;⁸—a child born and a Son given whose name is the mighty God, and of the increase of whose government there shall be no end;⁹—a rod out of

¹ Hos. iii.⁴ Isa. ii.⁷ Isa. vi.² Hos. xi.; Matt. ii.⁵ Isa. iv.⁸ Isa. vii.³ Hos. xiii.; 1 Cor. xv.⁶ John xii.⁹ Isa. ix.

the stem of Jesse, and a Branch out of his roots; full of the Spirit of the Lord; reigning in righteousness; slaying the wicked; restoring Israel; and gathering to Him the Gentiles¹—while causing nation after nation of the Gentiles to perish,² making a feast of fat things for His people, removing from them the covering of condemnation, and the vail of ignorance, and swallowing up death in victory³—sweeping away refuges of lies, and laying in Zion for a sure foundation a tried stone, a precious corner-stone⁴—a King reigns in righteousness, judging rebellious Jews and hostile heathen, casting out all the impenitently vile, pouring out His Spirit on His people, and filling them with righteousness and peace, with quietness and assurance for ever⁵—the voice of him that crieth, Prepare ye the way of the Lord; His glory revealed; coming with a strong hand; and feeding His flock like a shepherd⁶—rivers opened in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys⁷—a bruised reed He shall not break; the smoking flax He shall not quench⁸—a light to lighten the Gentiles; MY salvation to the ends of the earth⁹—My servant more marred than any man, and His form more than the sons of men¹⁰—He hath no form nor comeliness; when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him; despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities—all we like sheep had gone astray; and the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all; brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not His mouth; it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed; see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied¹¹—arise,

¹ Isa. xi.⁴ Isa. xxviii.⁷ Isa. xli.¹⁰ Isa. lii.² Isa. xlii.-xxiv.⁵ Isa. xxix.-xxxiii.⁸ Isa. xlii.¹¹ Isa. liii.³ Isa. xxv.⁶ Isa. xl.⁹ Isa. xlix.

shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee; the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising¹—the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek²—the righteousness of Zion and Jerusalem shall go forth as brightness; and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.³

Micah repeating the woes threatened to all classes, as workers of iniquity, calls and encourages them to repent and turn to God, and to take refuge in His mercy, by describing the happy state of the teachable and upright under the coming "Ruler in Israel," who, in respect of His human nature, would be born in "Bethlehem," while in respect of His divine nature, "His goings forth have been of old from everlasting."⁴

Jeremiah, though naturally retiring, under the call and by the grace of God, stands forth with uncompromising fidelity and firmness in the midst of the deadly outrages which he suffered, to proclaim the wickedness of all ranks, while pathetically deploring the miseries of his country. And as the chief stay which he leaned upon, and presented to others to lean upon, he declared that when the ark of the covenant ceased to be looked to or spoken of as the pledge of the divine presence, returning penitents would find salvation in the Lord their God⁵—that in those days the Lord would make a new covenant with them, neither to depart from them, nor to allow them to depart from Him⁶—that He would Himself become Jehovah their righteousness⁷—that He would cleanse them from all their iniquity, while pardoning it all, and fill the hearts and places which sin had made desolate with tokens of His goodness, and with the voice of joy and gladness.⁸

¹ Isa. lx.³ Isa. lxii.⁵ Jer. iii.⁷ Jer. xxiii.² Isa. lxi.⁴ Micah iv., v.⁶ Jer. xxxi.⁸ Jer. xxxiii.

Daniel foretells that the stone cut out of the mountain without hands shall break in pieces, and annihilate all the great kingdoms of the earth, and become itself a great kingdom, to stand for ever¹—that the Son of Man having received from the Ancient of Days an universal and everlasting kingdom, shall fill it with the saints of the Most High²—that, as informed by the angel Gabriel, within so many weeks, prophetic weeks, weeks of years, Messiah the Prince would come and be cut off, not for Himself, but to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness³—and that at the appointed time many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.⁴

Amidst the experiences of sin, and the reproofs and warnings which *Ezekiel* uttered, no more impressive statements are found in Scripture than those which he made of the blessings of the salvation that is in Christ⁵—of the life-giving power of His Spirit⁶—and of the great living temple for God upon the earth that shall be at length formed of the redeemed followers of the Lamb.⁷

Obadiah, in the short record of his prophecies, connects the providential extinction of the Edomites and the restoration of the children of Israel with the times of the gospel, when "the kingdom shall be the Lord's."

Zechariah, who was contemporary with Haggai, and who also returned with the captives from Babylon, in order to encourage the Jews to rebuild the temple, was inspired to repeat visions and prophecies one after another that, figuratively, yet impressively, set forth Christ coming as our King and High Priest, to establish His kingdom, build His spiritual

¹ Dan. ii.³ Dan. ix.⁵ Ezek. xxxvi.⁷ Ezek. xl., &c.² Dan. vii.⁴ Dan. xii.⁶ Ezek. xxxvii.

temple, to be in it a priest upon His throne, to convert the Gentiles, and to enlarge and prosper His Church¹—amidst reproofs of hypocrisy, and warnings against rebellion, he foretells prosperity to Jerusalem, and the conversion of all nations²—predictions of ruin to the nations around, and of mercy to remnants of them, are followed by prophecies of Christ's entering Jerusalem on an ass's colt; of the benefits of His kingdom, and the blood of His covenant; of the victories, privileges, and joy of His Church.³ In the midst of promises and threatenings since fulfilled, or still fulfilling, or destined at a future day to be fulfilled, we have set before us the care of the Good Shepherd for His flock, and the betrayal of Christ for thirty pieces of silver⁴—the wonderful deliverance to come one day to the Jews, when, the Spirit being poured out upon them, they shall look on Christ whom they pierced, and mourn, and see in His hands the wounds that were made in the house of His friends, and the sword of Jehovah's justice smiting the Good Shepherd, the man that was Jehovah's fellow, as He gave His life for the sheep; when, seeing before their eyes the opened fountain filled with His blood, they shall wash in it and be clean; and when, further, in His character of God their Saviour, He shall be as plainly revealed to them as if His feet stood visibly before them on the Mount of Olives; and when, in their unreserved surrender of themselves to His cause, they shall emphatically become holiness unto the Lord.⁵

To stimulate Zerubbabel the Governor, and Joshua the High Priest, and, through them, the returned Jews, to go on with their rebuilding of the second temple, the prophet *Haggai* is divinely inspired to inform them that "the desire of all nations," who could be no other than Christ, would come

¹ Zech. i., iv., vi.³ Zech. ix.⁵ Zech. xii., xiii., xiv.² Zech. vii., viii.⁴ Zech. xi.

to that temple and fill it with His glory, and so make the glory of it to be greater than that even of Solomon's temple, by reason of the divine, all-comprehensive, eternal peace, of which the proclamation would be made within its courts, and thence carried over all the earth, and down through all generations.

And while Haggai urged the rebuilding of the temple by such considerations, *Malachi*, the last of the prophets, employed the same prospects to give point to his rebukes of the people's sin in neglecting or corrupting the ordinances of the temple, and force to his calls to them to present the sacrifices and offerings, and to practise the righteousness, which the Lord required at their hands; saying, "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple." "But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?" The day that cometh shall burn up all the proud, and all that do wickedly, root and branch. "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings."

Such are at once the manifoldness, the oneness, and the clearness of the predictive utterances concerning Christ, contained in the prophets.

Practical reflections.

In surveying the history of the children of Israel given in the books styled "the prophets," the truths and precepts which they taught, and the predictions which they uttered, and in looking at these subjects, in connection with what is predictive in the LORD'S dealings with His servants in antediluvian and patriarchal times, and in the dispensation which He gave to the children of Israel by the hand of Moses, the practical reflections that are suggested may be

thus summarily stated. *First*, The promise given to our first parents after the fall, that promise of promises, containing within it all other promises, refers to Christ, and to the redemption from sin to be found in Him alone. Therefore, all grace given to sinful men from the beginning, all the blessings of salvation, pardon, renewal, sanctification, and so forth, flowed to them out of that promise, that is, out of Him in whom all the promises are yea and amen. And all the personal piety, purity, and virtue in the redeemed from the beginning, flowed out of that promise, and from the grace conveyed by it. *Second*, All the divinely appointed sacrifices, purifications, and ceremonial observances of whatever sort, had no meaning, and no power to benefit, except as types of Christ's redeeming work, types that led up to Him, and formed channels through which, from Him, the blessing came. *Third*, The publication and enforcement of the great moral law had two objects in view, which in reality combined in one happy result, in the case of all whom the enforcement of it properly affected and influenced. For, first, one object of its enforcement was to convince men of their sinfulness, and so lead them to Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth: and further, having served this purpose, another object was, that such as were thus led to Christ might receive the law anew from Him as their Redeemer, not now for the impossible end of being obeyed *in order to* their salvation, but that, being saved, they might be guided by His law in living to Him who had saved them by His grace. *Fourth*, The nation of Israel throughout its history was blessed with outward safety and prosperity, or visited with disasters and desolation, according to the measure of its public fidelity or faithfulness in its treatment of the divine laws and ordinances; while the number of the truly saved in each successive generation, consisted of those who, through these

laws and ordinances, were led to embrace and live upon the promise of spiritual redemption, and who received from Him to whom the promise referred, the grace that saved them. *Fifth*, The work of the prophets consisted, first of all, of zealous endeavours, in the midst of whatever risks and sufferings, to proclaim and enforce the spiritual character and ends of these divine laws and ordinances, to set forth the guilt and danger of all classes, from the highest to the humblest, in so fearfully transgressing them and trampling them under foot, and to bring them to repentance and reformation, as the only way of escaping the miseries that had come or were coming on them. And, next, as the fittest of all considerations for awakening them to spiritual realities, and quickening them to spiritual life, and so furnishing them with blessed foretastes and earnestness of the spiritual redemption to be brought to His people by their promised Messiah when He came, the prophets were inspired by the Spirit of Christ which was in them, to foretell, in a most impressive manner, His union of the divine and human natures in His person; His infinite majesty and unspeakable lowliness; His unsearchable greatness, and the unsearchable riches of His grace; His manifold works of power and mercy; His unparalleled sufferings and equally unparalleled glory; the extent and perpetuity of His reign of righteousness and peace; and the immeasurable blessings of His boundless and everlasting kingdom. *Sixth*, The dealings of the LORD with His chosen people, and their destiny, and, not less, His dealings with the other nations of the earth, and their destiny, were arranged and determined chiefly in respect of their several relations to the promised Messiah, and to the work which, when He came, He would commence, and which, ever after, He would continue to perform on the earth, even until all the redeemed from among men are gathered into His kingdom, and until He turns

the impenitently wicked into hell, with all the nations that forget God. These are at least some of the leading facts that are set forth in the writings of the prophets, or the reflections suggested by them, and that combine to show how truly "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," how Old Testament history, institutions, laws, ordinances, and prophecies run up to and centre in Christ, as He who "filleteth all in all."

VII.

CHRIST "IN THE PSALMS."

"All things must be fulfilled which were written in the . . . PSALMS . . . concerning me."—LUKE xxiv. 44.

A SUMMARY view of the way in which the psalms testify of Christ may be given in the following manner. Some of them are more expressly Messianic. In others, their reference to Christ is declared in the New Testament. In others the allusions to ancient Israel are figurative representations of Christ and His Church under the gospel. In others, still, the spiritual meaning of the references to the Mosaic ritual is declared in the psalms themselves. In those psalms which express the delight of believers in the holy law of God, there is implied with regard to those who experienced that delight, the presence in them of that spiritual life and liberty which are found in Christ alone. Further still, the psalms which are formed of such lofty adorations of the divine perfections as displayed in the works of creation and providence, are adorations of Christ, by whom God made the world, who upholdeth all things by the word of His power, and who is redeeming creation from the ruins of the fall.

FIRST. There are psalms in which the things stated, while, in the first instance, suggested by, and having reference to, and in some degree verified in, the actual history and experience of David, or Solomon, or Moses, or any one else connected with the composition of them, cannot be viewed as having been fully realised in any mere human creature, but *plainly* apply ultimately, and in more or fewer particulars exclusively, as they are for the most

part in the New Testament thus applied expressly, to the Messiah. The psalms in question are prophetic representations of Christ and His redeeming work, and the experiences which His people have of His grace. Thus,

According to PSALM ii., as quoted in Acts iv., while the powers of earth combine against the Lord Jesus Christ, He pours His mockery on their helpless rage, sits as King in Zion, dashes to pieces all His enemies, and makes His blessing to rest on all who submit to Him, and love and serve Him.

In PSALM viii., as quoted in Heb. ii., Christ, as the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, regains the dominion on earth which the first Adam forfeited by disobedience.

PSALMS xxii., lxix., xvi., and others, as quoted or referred to in Matt. xxvii., Rom. xi., Acts i., ii., prophetically represent Christ as suffering every kind of bodily and mental distress from human enmity, and, at length, for a season, forsaken even by God; and yet, though, under these endurances, He died and was buried, His body did not return to corruption: on the contrary, He rose in triumph from the grave, and by the path of life ascended to fulness of joy in His Father's presence.

The words of PSALM xl., "Sacrifice and offering," &c., "Lo, I come," &c., are declared in Heb. x. to be the words of Christ as to His coming to terminate animal sacrifice and to take away sin by offering Himself.

In PSALM xlv., as quoted in Heb. i., Christ stands forth to view, fairer than the children of men; clothed with glory, and girded with power; to conquer enemies into willing submission; to bind them to His throne and service; to unite them to Himself in closest bonds of reverence and love; to sanctify them into His likeness; and, finally, to bring them, with infinite gladness, to dwell in His immediate presence for ever.

In PSALM lxxviii., as quoted in Eph. iv., we have Him who came down as the Lawgiver in such majesty on Sinai, set before us as in His character of God the Saviour, ascending gloriously on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell among them, and thus, as the living, life-giving Head of the Church, filling all its true members with His presence, grace, and Holy Spirit.

In PSALM lxxii., Christ is presented before us as possessed of a universal dominion, which He exercises for the salvation of the poor and needy, and so as to multiply His willing and devoted subjects and servants, until all nations are blessed in Him and call Him blessed, and the earth is filled with His glory.

In PSALM cx., quoted in Mark xii., Acts ii., Heb. i., vii., it is said that Christ is made a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec, and that His seat is at Jehovah's right hand, from whence He sends forth His power to render His people willing to serve Him in the beauty of holiness, and to make His enemies His footstool.

In PSALM cxviii., quoted in Matt. xxi., Acts iv., Eph. ii., it is declared that Christ is the Stone which the builders, the rulers of the people, and the elders of Israel refused, and yet which is become the headstone of the corner, that He whom they rejected and crucified God hath raised up, and that in Him and in Him alone there is salvation.

And in PSALM cxxxii., we have the promise of the fruit of David's body being placed on his throne, which is declared in Acts ii. to have been fulfilled in Christ; and in that psalm we see Christ taking up His rest in the Church; blessing her provision, and satisfying her poor with bread; clothing her priests with salvation, and causing her saints to shout aloud for joy; and ruling

with such light and strength, that His enemies are clothed with shame, while He is encompassed and crowned with ever-increasing glory.

SECOND. There are other psalms in which, from a first or superficial reading of them, nothing would be apt to appear as referring to Christ, but in which passages are found that in the New Testament are declared to have this reference as their chief meaning. Thus, passages in Psalms xviii., lxvii., cxvii., are quoted in Romans xv., to prove that the Gentiles would joyfully give all praise and glory to God, for His mercy in Jesus Christ. The passage in Psalm xli. 9, is declared in John xiii. 18, to have been fulfilled in the betrayal of Christ. The words of Psalm xliv. 22 are said in Romans viii. 36 to have been fulfilled in the sufferings which the followers of Christ endured for His sake. It is said in Matthew xiii. that Jesus spake in parables, to fulfil that which is recorded in Psalm lxxviii. as spoken by "the prophet." In what is said in Psalm xc. of the rest in Canaan, of which, through unbelief, the first generation of Israel fell short, we are told in Hebrews iv. that the higher and principal meaning is the danger of those who are under the gospel, falling short, through unbelief, of the rest found in Christ on earth, and at length in heaven. The words of Psalm cxvii., "Worship Him, all ye gods," are declared in Hebrews i. 6 to be a command to all the angels of God to worship Christ.

THIRD. The nation of Israel, as we have already seen, being, throughout its history, a figurative representation of the spiritual condition of such of that nation as were spiritually minded, and also of all the redeemed in Christ under the gospel, every allusion in the psalms to their national character, privileges, and blessings, as well as to their sins and miseries, is fitted and intended to convey a great spiritual truth, or a great spiritual lesson, to the Church

of Christ as such, and to its families and members severally. We have already seen that their observing of meats and drinks, and sacred seasons, formed only a shadow of good things to come, a shadow of which the body or substance was to be found only in Christ, and His grace and salvation¹—that the gifts which the priests offered according to the law, served merely as an example and shadow of heavenly things²—that their ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary were but figures, for the time-being, of the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God³—and that the events of their history, from Abraham to Moses, from their redemption from Egypt till the end of their wilderness journey, and throughout the ages of their occupancy of Canaan, were divinely designed to typify the great spiritual realities of the redemption of the gospel.⁴

Now, many of the psalms are full of allusions to events in the history of the patriarchs, to the redemption from Egypt, to the deliverance of the Red Sea, to the scene at Sinai, to the occurrences that took place in the course of the forty years' abode in the desert, to the entrance into Canaan, and to the manifold subjects of deepest interest furnished by the history of the children of Israel in Canaan. There are, throughout the psalms, references to promises and covenants, to mercies and judgments, to sins and sufferings, and penitence and prayers, and pardon and deliverance, and the overthrow of enemies, to triumphs and joys, to sacrifices and purifications, to manna from heaven and water from the rock, to the tabernacle and temple, to the sanctuary and the courts of our God, to Judah and Salem, to Zion and Jerusalem, to the mountains round about Jerusalem, to the glorious things that are spoken of the city of

¹ Col. iv.

² Heb. viii.

³ Heb. ix.

⁴ Rom. iv. ; 1 Cor. x. ; Gal. iv. ; Heb. *passim*.

God, and to the Shepherd of Israel, who dwelleth between the cherubim. And since the Christian Church is expressly declared in the New Testament to be, under the gospel, the Zion of God,¹ and the Jerusalem which is above, and is the mother of all believers,² there is not one of these manifold references to ancient Israel in the psalms, but applies, and is designed for application, to the redeemed through all ages. Yea, every such allusion is fraught to the Christian with more light than it afforded to the Jew; for the Jew, having the truth only in figure, could but dimly perceive it through such a medium; but the Christian, having the reality which the figure was intended to convey, sees all the more clearly the force of the form in the substance which he grasps, and so can use the form all the more effectually as a means of impressing on his mind the truth itself.

FOURTH. There are psalms in which the writer shows that, while he had regard to the ceremonial sacrifices and purifications which the law required, he had an overpowering sight and feeling of the paramount necessity and importance of experiencing the cleansing virtue of a true atonement, and of saving grace. In the 51st Psalm, for instance, David sets forth the original and inherited depravity of his nature and his actual transgressions, in as impressive a representation of the malignity of sin as is to be found in Scripture. He then pleads to be purged with hyssop that he may be clean, that is, that the ashes prepared and kept ready for use, which consisted of the remains of the slain and consumed heifer, and of the pure running water with which it was mingled, might be applied to him to take his sin away. Yet manifestly he was not looking to that ceremonial cleansing as sufficient, but through it looking

¹ Heb. xiii.

² Gal. i.

wholly to the far higher sacrifice for sin, and supplicating the Holy Spirit's application of it to his guilty conscience and sinful heart and life. For he pleaded that God would deliver him from blood-guiltiness, would create a clean heart and renew a right spirit within him, would not cast him from His presence, nor take His Holy Spirit from him, but visit him with the joy of His salvation, and uphold him with His free Spirit. And in the after part of the psalm, he still further shows, that while he realised the obligation of offering the typical sacrifices according to the law, he realised their utter unfitness in themselves, and in the mere presentation of them, to secure divine forgiveness and favour, or to be a sufficient acknowledgment of the salvation prayed for; and he inculcated a faith in the Lord, and a gratitude for redemption, which completely identified the experience of the Psalmist with that of all believers, who are all brought into a state of forgiveness, and acceptance, and peace, and fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. Such psalms as the xxxii., lxvi., cxxx., &c., are psalms of a similar character; and no language could be fitter than that which they contain to express the experience of all who are "washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."¹

FIFTH. There are again such psalms as the xix. and cxix., full of expressions of delight in the law of God, such as equal or exceed the highest and richest and most blissful experiences of the divine life, and the most notable exercises of the gracious affections, to be found among the holiest and happiest children of God. It is an absolute impossibility, in the nature of things, that such experience could have been attained by any Old Testament believers, except through the same work of the Spirit of Christ in them. For

¹ 1 Cor. vi.

God's holiness, justice, goodness, and truth are unchangeable. The law which issued from these perfections and is stamped with them is unchangeable. The malignity of sin is unchangeable: and the fact that every man is utterly depraved by it is unchangeable. The necessity of the endurance of the curse denounced against transgressors, or the impossibility of any transgressor being pardoned unless the curse due to his sin is first endured, is unchangeable. The obligation to fulfil the law by a perfect obedience, ere a title is established to divine favour and eternal life, is unchangeable. The fact of the utter helplessness and hopelessness of man's fallen and ruined state, so far as any personal efforts on his own part to save himself are concerned, is unchangeable. And not less unchangeable is the necessity of the satisfaction to law and justice for sin, which the sufferings and death of the Divine Redeemer rendered—of the fulfilment of the law's demands, which it received from Him in His perfect obedience to it—and of the enlightening, quickening, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ in the souls of men, in applying the redemption thus provided in Christ, and in bringing them under the covert of His blood, and the merits of His obedience, and the saving power of the truth as it is in Him, in order to their pardon, and acceptance, and renewal to holiness, and admission into the family of God; their possession of its privileges, and attainment of His likeness; and their final entrance into His presence, and kingdom, and glory.

Now there never was a sinner on earth who was or could be brought to love the holy God, and His holy law, and to take delight in Him and it, without first receiving pardon of all his sins through the one atonement provided, and acceptance for his person in the righteousness provided, and deliverance from the dominion of sin by the grace bestowed. For only in his felt freedom from

the condemnation which he deserved, in his felt deliverance from the bondage of the lusts which he has been made to hate, in his sight of the divine holiness, justice, and truth, law and government vindicated, upheld, and honoured; in the way by which the divine mercy thus reaches, embraces, and saves him; only thus is he constrained to yield himself up in love and gratitude to God, as alive from the dead, to serve Him with gladness, and to walk before Him in newness of life. Only as thus redeemed from evil, and restored to favour and fellowship with God, and confiding in the grace of which they had become partakers, to preserve their souls in life, and guide them in the way of peace, only thus were true believers servants and children of God led and enabled to love the law of the Lord, and to make it their meditation all the day. And so deep and rich were their experiences of what the grace of God had done, and was doing for them, and so great and joyful their hope of what it would yet accomplish, that the psalms in which these experiences and hopes are recorded, are still found and will to the end of time be found, the fittest means of giving utterance and fresh strength to the highest, and holiest, and most joyful experiences of those, in whom grace is reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ.

SIXTH. There are Psalms which celebrate the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in the works of creation and providence. If some are ready to ask, what special relation has Christ to these works, and to the psalms which celebrate their author? our answer is, *First*, "By Him all things were created that are in heaven and on earth . . . and by Him all things consist;"¹ "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."² It is "by His Son" that "God made the worlds;" and it is the

¹ Col. i.² John i.

Son of God who is "upholding all things by the word of His power."¹ If so, the heavens declare the glory of the Son of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork,² and He equally with the Father and the Spirit, is magnified in the psalms of praise for the works of creation and providence. *Second*, in consequence of the entrance of sin among the works of God, through the fall of angels and of man, a general disturbance and disorder, and great desolations have ensued: the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain till now. But Christ is about to deliver creation from the bondage of corruption "into the glorious liberty of the children of God."³ By Christ, the Father is reconciling all things unto Himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.⁴ The Son of Man shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. The purification of creation shall be accomplished when the heavens being on fire are dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth and its works are burned up; and then shall at once rise to view the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.⁵ Now there are psalms full of the loftiest adorations of Jehovah, as displaying His natural and moral perfections in these works of His hands, and in the manner in which He is preserving, governing, and disposing of them, and combining them all in showing forth His praises. But, as we have seen, it is the hand of Christ by which they are created, formed, upheld, and guided to their destiny; and in connection and harmony with this fact, may be mentioned the way in which the words of Psalm cii. 25 are applied in Hebrews i. The suppliant who utters the words of the psalm, amidst his overwhelming afflictions, takes refuge in the Lord his God Who dwelleth in Zion, and Who will build it

¹ Heb. i.² Ps. viii.³ Rom. viii.⁴ Col. i.⁵ 2 Pet. iii.

up and appear in His glory. He thus takes refuge in Him because of His unchangeableness in the midst of His changing creatures, saying, "Behold Thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands; they shall perish but Thou shalt endure," &c. But the apostle quotes the words as spoken by God the Father to the Son, by whom he had already said the world was made and upheld. If then Christians fail to realise the presence and glory of Christ in all the psalms, that are full of the divine workings in creation and Providence, and of the glory yet to accrue to God from all His works, it is not because Christ is not in all these works from the beginning, but because their still ignorant and erring minds and hearts fail to recognise Him; for assuredly, in reference to them as to all things else in the universe, Christ is all in all.

Finally, as regards "the Song of Solomon," which is one of the books named "the Psalms," Christ's presence with His redeemed, and their communion with Him are set forth in such terms as the following in that Song of songs. *Prayers for the tokens of His love, and for the joy awakened by the very mention of His name:* "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for Thy love is better than wine; because of the savour of Thy good ointment, Thy name is as ointment poured forth."—*Longings for the Shepherd and Bishop of souls:* "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon:" and the gracious answer, "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock."—*The blessedness found in Christ:* "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste; He brought me into His banqueting-house, and His banner over me was love."—*The miseries of spiritual desertion, and the joy of a recovered sight and sense of divine favour:* "I sought Him whom my

soul loveth ; I sought Him, but I found Him not. . . . Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth ? . . . I found Him. . . . I held Him, and would not let Him go."—*The attractiveness of the Church* when washed in His blood, and clothed with His righteousness : "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in Thee."—*Prayer to the Spirit to come and fit them for the presence of Christ*, and the *pleasure which He takes in answering such prayers* : "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse ; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice ; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey ; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends, drink ; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."—*The high esteem for Christ* when His presence is realised : "My beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand."—*The brightness and power of the Church* when His glory rests upon her : "She looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." *The swift and lofty movements*, the God-ward, heavenward movement of the soul when breathed upon by the Spirit of Christ : "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me as the chariots of Amina-dab."—*The habitually heavenward course* which believers take, and keep, through the world, in felt and cherished *dependence* on the almighty unchanging *love of Christ* : "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved ? . . . Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm ; for Thy love is strong as death."

To all who have even but a slight acquaintance with the revelations of Christ in the Old Testament as Jehovah, the co-equal, co-eternal Son of God the Father, the Maker and Governor of the universe, and as Redeemer of men, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, to all such it will

appear but the appropriate consummation of all other manifestations of Himself to the ancient Church, to find that in the Song of Songs He and His redeemed were even then, through His gracious visitations, found in near, loving, blessed communion, and that the very mists then hanging over His person as God incarnate, only served to absorb their souls the more entirely with the glimpses given to them of His grace and glory as their all in all.

VIII.

MANKIND PROVING THEIR NEED OF CHRIST.

“The fulness of the time.”—GAL. iv. 4.

THE time here spoken of as “the fulness of the time” was that which was not only the time divinely determined on, but proved conclusively by all the circumstances of the case, to be the most befitting time for the coming of Christ, for the incarnation of the Son of God. His coming earlier would have been too soon; His coming later would have been too late. The world absolutely required it when it took place. Had it been longer delayed, the world would have utterly perished in its corruption.

The “good will to men” displayed in the incarnation, contemplated and secured two ends, viz., “glory to God,” and “peace on earth.” But to make sufficiently manifest the malignity of sin, and the righteousness of the divine anger against it, and also to show the love of God in sending His Son into the world to save sinners, it was needful to leave mankind to themselves, to their own wisdom and strength, until they demonstrated that, to whatever natural knowledge, or temporal prosperity, or greatness, they could and did by their own efforts attain, they were unable to recover either the lost image or forfeited favour of God; that by their own wisdom they could not attain to the knowledge of God, or even retain that knowledge when they received it from above; that they were inclined, and sure, only to depart further and further from Him. So that the only arrest put on these fatal tendencies was by a succession of supernatural interpositions of the divine hand—inter-

positions which were all connected with, and derived their virtue from, the redemption to be wrought out by the Son of God when sent forth in "the fulness of the time." The first four thousand years of the history of man were appointed and employed by God to make this demonstration complete.

I. *The course of things after the fall.*

Immediately after the fall, proof began and continued to be given of the natural course of men, in the pride, ungodliness, ambition, and sensuality of Cain and of his descendants—forms of evil that swelled and grew with their invention of useful arts, and their rapid advancement in worldly wealth. And instead of that depravity being repressed by the piety and virtue that were divinely created and kept alive in the hearts and lives of godly men like Abel, and Seth, and Enos, and Enoch, and by the long-continued and impressive warnings of Noah, human wickedness and violence only rose to a greater height, until God's long-suffering was exhausted, and all but Noah and his family were swept from the earth by the deluge.

After the flood a similar course of things was repeated. Noah's posterity for the most part quickly fell away to all evil. They rose indeed to temporal riches, power, and greatness. But pride and ambition and sensuality led them away from the service of the true God to that of idols. And though scattered lights continued to shine here and there amidst the growing darkness, but for a special interposition of God, the knowledge of Him would have speedily died out among the sons of men. The interposition was of this nature.

II. *Separation of Abraham and of Israel from the rest of the world.*

Abraham and his family and their descendants, and the

nation into which they grew, were separated from all the other nations of the earth, were walled in from the rest of mankind, and preserved, to a greater or less extent, in the knowledge, worship, and service of Jehovah, while all the other nations of the earth were left, for above fifteen hundred years, to walk in their own ways. And this divine arrangement continued in operation, though sadly misimproved by the chosen people, until at length the Messiah came, the Messiah first promised to our fallen parents in paradise, as the seed of the woman, afterwards promised as the seed of Abraham, and promised at a still future time as the Son of David; until He came, and finished the work of redemption, so long and so endlessly prefigured and predicted, and set up that everlasting kingdom, into which He is gathering all the ransomed, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

The separation of Abraham and of his posterity from the rest of the world, as the chosen depositories of the knowledge, ordinances, worship, and law of God, assumed its fixed and permanent form in the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt, and their settlement and continuance for ages in the land of Canaan. Then the other nations of mankind were left to show that, amidst all their intellectual achievements, and all the prosperity, and resources, greatness, and power to which they attained, they utterly failed to acquire, or even to retain, the knowledge, love, and service of God, and uniformly sunk into idolatry and its attendant abominations, and plunged deeper and deeper into false religion or atheism, until they perished in their own corruption. Then, too, even the favoured peculiar people, the Jews, not less plainly proved that the impressive but still only preparatory ordinances under which they were placed, did not suffice to render and keep them right in heart with God, and steadfast in His covenant. So that from the time of the settlement

of the children of Israel in Canaan, the facts of the respective histories of the Gentile nations on the one hand, and of the Jews upon the other, at length culminated in an absolute demonstration that if the salvation of the world was to be secured, it could only be by the incarnation of God's eternal Son. Let us mention a few facts that prove and illustrate this statement.

III. *The history of the Gentile and of the Jewish nations respectively, as proving the necessity of the Redeemer's coming, and preparing for it.*

I. As to the GENTILE nations, their history was allowed to run on, until, in every conceivable way, they showed the hopelessness of their moral and spiritual condition without Christ, and the necessity of His coming. In proving and illustrating this great truth, we shall, as much as possible, confine our attention to facts with which earnest and intelligent readers of the Bible are familiar.

One after another, the nations forsook even such knowledge as they, in their earlier history, possessed of God, and became so base in their idolatries and their morals, as to prove that, in their systems of religion and morality, there remained no power to stop the progress of their corruption, and to avert their decay and ruin. This lesson of their history was rendered all the more striking by the fact, that all the mere natural and secular elements of human greatness entered largely into their institutions, their achievements, and their character, and yet proved of no avail for their highest, permanent wellbeing, in the absence of that knowledge and love of God, which flow from the revelation of Christ's person and work, and His inward work in man by the power of His Holy Spirit. The following instances will show the truth of this affirmation.

EGYPT was early noted for the produce of its fruitful soil,

the cattle of its rich pastures, and its teeming waters¹—for its war-chariots and horsemen—for its pyramids and other magnificent structures—for its holy temples and palaces—and for its attainments in science and the arts of life. Its early reputation for wisdom is evident from the statement, that “Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,”² and that “Solomon excelled all the wisdom of Egypt.”³ Now as regards their religion; they were not, especially in the earlier times of their history, without some knowledge of a supreme Being, of the immortality of the soul, and even of the resurrection of the body, and of a future state of retribution. But they seem from an early period to have multiplied their deities, till not only such heavenly bodies as the sun and moon, but also animals, trees, and rocks, and still meaner things, became to them objects of worship. Their morality corresponded. Their laws and government, while good in some respects, were in other respects fundamentally vicious. Great indecencies and impurities attached to their nationally-established religion. Its sacred shield was thrown over their practice of falsehood and fraud. These and other vices in their institutions and laws, and in the character of the people, which there was nothing to remedy, gradually wrought out their ruin. And from being distinguished among ancient peoples, Egypt at length sank into the condition, in which it has so long continued, of the basest of kingdoms.

The city of TYRE rose to a state of exceeding prosperity, and possessed power and greatness, which made it famous among ancient kingdoms, and able to resist, again and again, the efforts of mighty conquerors to take it, and to possess themselves of its wealth. It was crowded with merchants—enriched by exporting corn from Egypt to all countries

¹ Isa. xix.

² Acts vii.

³ 1 Kings iv.

—the great emporium of the commerce of the world—a city of great antiquity—a city of unexampled resources, wealth, power, dignity, and splendour—and a joyous city. But its pride and profaneness, its enmity to Jehovah, and its cruelty to His people, provoked Him at last to let loose on it powerful and ambitious kings and conquerors. And it went down, like all communities of men that remain without, or that abandon, the knowledge and fear of the true God. Its shipping was annihilated, its dwellings and streets, and walls of defence and harbours, were all laid desolate, till the nations around that witnessed its greatness, and now its overthrow, were filled with amazement, and grief, and horror at its doom. Its surviving population were swept into captivity, or fled to other lands to pine away in their miseries, until they perished out of sight, and out of mind. And the site of the great city became a naked rock, on which a few fishermen spread their nets to dry.

NINEVEH, the capital of the Assyrian empire, was an exceeding great city—twenty miles in length—twelve in breadth—sixty in compass—requiring three days to walk round its magnificent walls. The inhabitants became wealthy, luxurious, and corrupt, and were threatened by Jonah with a speedy destruction, which was averted for the time by their repentance. The Assyrians, whose capital it became, were proud, ambitious, tyrannical, and cruel to their neighbours. They were specially formidable enemies to Israel and Judah. They despoiled Israel, and carried the ten tribes into a captivity from which they never returned. And they were on the eve of overthrowing Jerusalem, when, in one night, the breath of divine anger passed over their camp, and turned into corpses 185,000 armed men. And as neither their temporary repentance under Jonah's preaching, nor the voice of such a judgment as that just mentioned, resulted in any thorough reformation; as no moral influences operated

among them to produce any thorough change of their character, they continued and increased in their wickedness, till overtaken by the judgments foretold by Nahum and Zephaniah; when the Medes took their city, and so utterly destroyed it, that the very site on which it stood became for ages unknown.

After the destruction of Nineveh, BABYLON became queen of the East—famed for its beauty, strength, and grandeur—for its walls, temples, and hanging gardens—for the banks of the river that flowed through it—and for the artificial canals and lakes, made for the draining of the river in the season of its overflowing. It is called in Scripture, “great Babylon”—“the glory of kingdoms”—“the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency”—“the golden city”—“the lady of kingdoms”—“abundant in treasures”—“the praise of the whole earth.” But all this greatness was founded in the bloody conquests, the endless slaughter, and the utter enslavement of the tribes and nations which the Babylonian conquerors made their prey. Amidst all this splendour, the land was “the land of graven images.” The people in city and country were addicted to every vice. They were as lewd and debauched as they were superstitious. In particular, like the Ninevites, they blasphemed the true God, and were bitter enemies of His people; for, as the Ninevites had swept into a final captivity the ten tribes, so the Babylonians threw down the temple, the walls, and the houses of Jerusalem, and carried off the people of Judah and Jerusalem into a sore and wasting exile, and impiously triumphed in their success, as if by the power of their false gods they had overcome the power of Jehovah Himself. “Therefore,” said the Lord, “I will punish the king of Babylon, as I have punished the king of Assyria.”¹ And so it happened. First, Nebuchadnezzar, in the midst of his

¹ Jerem. I.

proud and wicked boasting, was smitten with seven years' madness and degradation, and then, in a humbled frame, restored to his throne. And at length, when judgment mingled with mercy failed to turn rulers and people from their wickedness, they suddenly perished in the midst of their abominable and impious carousals. For when the monarch and his ten thousand lords and his wives and concubines were feasting, and when, in mockery of Jehovah, the golden vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem were brought forth at the king's command, and they were all quaffing their wine from the sacred vessels, and praising their gods of gold and silver, of brass and iron, of wood and stone, they were suddenly appalled by the sight of a hand upon the wall, tracing, in letters of fire, their wickedness, and their doom. And that very night, the besieging enemy found entrance into what was deemed their impregnable city; slew king and lords, and multitudes more, and overwhelmed with sudden, final destruction, the powerful, haughty, idolatrous, God-defying kingdom of Babylon.

PERSIA rose on the ruins of Babylon, and, in connection with God's determination to employ it in setting free His people from their captivity there, Cyrus, and others who led its forces, and ruled its affairs, were made to know to some extent the true God, and to perform His will, as is evident from statements in the books of Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Isaiah. Still, the Persians did not retain such knowledge of God as had been imparted to them; and their religion, while not so grossly idolatrous as that of other nations, was, as a system, as much opposed to the truth; for it was chiefly a belief in the reign of two sovereign principles or powers, of mutually opposing and destructive characters, called good and evil, light and darkness; to which were to be traced respectively all the good and all the evil on the earth. They also supposed various objects

to be possessed of claims to a divine homage. And their sacrifices were offered to fire and other elements in nature, as well as to the sun and moon, and other heavenly bodies. Their religion, therefore, seemed neither to regenerate nor to restrain them: and, in point of fact, they were characterised alike by fierceness in war, followed by great cruelty to the conquered, and by unrestrained licentiousness of manners. The resources obtained from the spoils of war, and extorted from subject tribes and nations, were spent in luxurious and sensual indulgences, indulgences raised to the highest pitch, and carried to the utmost excess. A greatness thus reared and sustained could not last. And so, after the kingdom of Persia had endured for about two hundred years, it was crushed by the resistless arm of Alexander the Great, and thus made way for the Macedonian Empire.

The land of GREECE then became the seat of that power, which, for a time, formally ruled the world. The chief power of Greece however lay not in the physical force by which the Macedonian conqueror brought and kept under subjection the nations; for that force, after the premature death of Alexander, quickly broke into separate fragments that played but a secondary and short-lived part, in ruling the world's destinies. The chief power of Greece was the commanding intellect of her sons, the finer natural minds and bodies with which they were gifted, and which rendered Greece the home of science, art, and literature. Their beautiful land itself, while requiring careful cultivation, received it from the inhabitants, and yielded abundant harvests to reward their industry. So that, as has been well remarked, "in that land, man reached the highest state of physical and mental perfection, of which, by his own exertions, he is capable, and produced works in every department of human skill or genius, which remain, and will, perhaps, for ever remain unmatched." What was the result, so far as

concerns man's highest relationships and interests? This was the result. "The music, painting, and sculpture of Greece tamed the fiercest, and refined the grossest passions of human nature, till they became objects of worship. Her intellect changed wisdom into sophistry, and boasted that it could argue on both sides of any question—that it could defend any cause, however bad—that it could turn right into wrong, and wrong into right, and make the worse appear the better reason." Worse still, it could throw the drapery of graceful concealment over the foulest and most loathsome corruptions, while that corruption was in full and fatal operation.

The perverse reasonings and moral pollutions, which the Greeks veiled with such inimitable skill, were protected and fostered rather than cured by their religious doctrines and observances. As we are reminded by Paul's address to them on Mars Hill, and learn from other sources, the only true object of worship was to them the unknown God. Such diverse and even conflicting opinions as the following prevailed among them, viz., that the world was eternal—that it was itself God—that it was made by chance—that it was ruled by lesser deities, with local and limited spheres of power, inhabiting particular temples in which only their help was found—that the gods fed on the fumes of animal sacrifices—that they were gratified by the splendid vestments of the priests—that they were pleased by the indulgence of the grossest passions in their honour—that different classes and races of men had a different origin—that the gods of higher order were too high to have intercourse with men—and that only by visible images of the Deity could he be approached—that there were many intercessors to come between them and the Supreme Being—that it was the highest virtue to follow nature and necessity—that there was no ground for believing in such

a future state of rewards and punishments as the Holy Scriptures reveal—and that the idea of a resurrection of the dead, was worthy only of ridicule. And so, the utmost civilisation to which they attained, left them still destitute of all knowledge, love, and enjoyment of the living and true God—left them unredeemed from their inherent moral depravity—led them to content themselves with the worship of numerous deities, as foul and malicious, as cunning and accustomed to deceit and lying, as they were themselves—and veiled and sanctioned their indulgence in all the lusts and passions of our corrupt nature. Two services, indeed, they did render to mankind; *first*, their intelligence being brought to bear on the ignorant and barbarous nations, helped to quicken their minds, and raise them out of their low and stagnant condition, and so render them more capable of listening to the Gospel when preached to them: and, *second*, their beautiful language, being spread and used in almost every land, furnished a precious vehicle for communicating the Gospel to the greater portion of the then known world. But all their unrivalled achievements in art, and science, and literature, in philosophy and religion, only served to prove that by no wisdom to which man is capable of attaining by his own efforts, can he find his way back to God, regain his lost image of his Maker, or become meet for His holy fellowship, and service, and presence. Conclusively to test and settle this question of man's moral impotency, one further experiment had to be made on a great scale by Rome.

In the divine providence, ROME was next permitted to do her best for the interests of mankind. And with exceeding practical sagacity and power she performed her part on this world's arena. The difficulties and dangers which beset her at the outset of her history trained her to resolute endurance. The lessons to be learned by a

strong native judgment, from her own history, and from the history of other nations, were studied by her, and turned to account. Beginning with the conquest and absorption of her immediate neighbours, she extended her aggressions to distant lands. Nation after nation went down before her invincible legions, till she grasped and held with firm hand the reins of universal sovereignty. At the same time, throughout the course of her developing history, she mingled religious rites and sanctions with all her achievements, and cultivated and displayed many stern natural virtues, and embodied in her constitution and government many admirable laws. She also adopted and cherished much learning and civilisation derived from Greece. The Roman people thus reared an empire which they proudly meant and hoped to be perpetual, with Rome, its capital, as the eternal city.

This great empire was the last of the four specially great kingdoms that God permitted to rise successively, and to possess, in turn, the chief parts of the earth, in order to demonstrate how much, or rather how little, men can do for their own, and for one another's true wellbeing. These four kingdoms had been symbolised by the great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in vision; of which Babylon formed the head of gold; Persia, the breast and arms of silver; Greece, the belly and thighs of brass; and Rome, the legs of iron, and the feet, partly of iron and partly of clay: while the gospel of Christ, accompanied by His Spirit, was symbolised by the little stone which was seen cut out without hands, and which smote the feet of the great image, and broke them in pieces, and made them as chaff which the wind carried away, till no place was found for them. And that little stone was about to commence its growth, a growth that would continue till it became a great mountain that filled the earth.

Rome was thus serving to complete the demonstration that the divine ruler among the nations had been giving, of the vanity of all man's own possible efforts to redeem himself from his evil state. Dominion had been given to Babylon, and she perished in her pride. Dominion had been given to Persia, and she perished in her luxury. Dominion had been given to Greece, and all the achievements of her wisdom, power, and genius, became the monuments of her vanity. And now to the pride of Babylon, the luxury of Persia, and the civilisation of Greece, Rome added the sagacity with which she planned her career, and the resoluteness with which she carried it out, until she became mistress of the world. And what, alas! did she then teach the world by her success? Even that might is right—that the love of dominion is above all law—that, had her power become permanent, beneath the iron-handed oppression with which she ruled the world, the bulk of its inhabitants would have become and continued helpless crouching slaves—and that mankind at large would have been paralysed, and sunk into a state of hopeless imbecility and decay. But happily, for humanity, there is and there can be no permanence in a power of that character. Separating men and keeping them separated from the Holy God, the morals of any such sovereignty have no basis in truth; but are determined by selfish interests and corrupt passions. Temporal ambition governs its movements. Prosperity brings in luxury. Luxury swells the tide of immorality. Under whatever outward splendours, vices pervade the nation, till it becomes rotten to the core, and perishes in its own corruption. And such was the rise, decline, and fall of the Roman empire. At the coming of Christ, it had not only reached its utmost greatness, but become thoroughly corrupt. Its state is accurately described in that terrible picture of the moral depravity

of the world, given by inspiration in the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans. And the unutterable vileness to which, according to that description of their moral condition, mankind, with all their power, resources, and wisdom, had brought themselves, and out of which they had no power of self-recovery, rendered it imperatively needful, if redemption was to be experienced on earth, that it should come from heaven, and come speedily.

2. While the Gentile nations were demonstrating the utter inability of human nature to deliver itself from its sinfulness and misery, and the necessity of the interposition of a divine Redeemer, how did the history of the JEWISH nation bear on this question?

Had the Jews received a system of religion sufficient to keep them near to God, and to bring the other nations of the world back to Him? Was their system of religion given to them by God as a complete and final system? Or was it a temporary, imperfect, and preparatory dispensation, designed to show the need of, and make way for, a better? The slightest glance at the history of the nation and land of the Jews, shows that God's great purpose in it was to bring about the Messiah's advent, and so establish a dispensation of grace for the world at large, and for all time. When ignorance of God, irreligion, idolatry, and moral corruption, had acquired the dominion, which they continued for generations to exercise over the other nations of the earth, in accordance with His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Jehovah at length delivered their descendants, the Jews, as His chosen people, from Egypt, covenanted with them at Sinai, settled them in Canaan, separated them and kept them separate from the rest of the world, and through means of the ordinances given to them to observe, made them already partakers of the great redemption, as they looked forward in faith to its being actually wrought

out by the Messiah when He came. The dispensation of prophecies, types, and figures, under which they were placed, was, in its nature, temporary, a shadow of good things to come, the substance being to be found only in the salvation accomplished by the incarnation, the ministry on earth, the obedience unto death, and the consequent resurrection and exaltation to His glory, of the Son of God.

Important purposes were served by this typical and temporary dispensation of grace to the Jews. It served to preserve the knowledge of God on the earth, during the time that the world at large was left to itself to demonstrate its total want of any self-redeeming power. Further, the evil of sin was impressively forced home on the consciences and hearts of the Jews, by the thousand ways in which, according to their law, they became defiled, and by the continual sacrifices and washings required for their cleansing. The evil of sin was still more impressively set forth by the total inefficacy of all their sacrifices and washings to take away their guilt and pollution as transgressors of God's holy and eternal law. They were thus affectingly taught to be ever looking beyond their typical sacrifices and purifications, and looking forward to the one great sacrifice, by which the Messiah, when He came, would make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness. They were thus also made to long for the Messiah's coming, while reverencing the sovereignty of God in determining the time and manner of the promised dispensation of His redeeming love.

While these and other wise, holy, and gracious purposes were at length served by the Jewish economy, and needed not its further continuance, there were other causes at work to bring it to an end. The Jews had, through all ages, shown themselves generally inclined, and at length they came, almost universally, to overlook and disown the

spiritual realities shadowed forth by the typical ordinances of the law of Moses. They had become, as a nation, accustomed to handle these ordinances with as much grossness as the heathen did their pagan rites. The faith of the Jews, instead of rising to spiritual and eternal things, had ceased to rise higher than the things which they could see and touch. They were at length hopelessly enveloped in utter spiritual darkness, and hopelessly dead in trespasses and sins. As regarded spiritual things, there had, in fact, come to be little or no difference between them and the other nations of the world. The apostle, in his Epistle to the Romans, accordingly declared and proved both Jews and Gentiles to be alike under sin, that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world be guilty before God.

Even the saving power which, in the experience of the remnant of believing Israelites, attended their appointed typical ordinances, did not prevent them from praying and longing, yea it made them all the more earnest, to have their own economy brought to an end. For, even to them, it was a burdensome yoke of ceremonies from which they were longing to be free, by entering into the light and liberty promised under the Messiah's reign. And these longings became more and more earnest as the day of the manifestation of God in the flesh drew near. And when He did become God manifest in the flesh, however sadly true it was that the world in which He was knew Him not, and His own to whom He came received Him not, there were, nevertheless, a few saintly souls waiting in the holy city and in the temple, to rejoice in His appearing, and in the redemption which He brought.

3. While, for the reason stated, the appearance of Christ on earth at an earlier period would have been premature,

there are other considerations which indicate that things were now, what they had never been till now, in a state of preparation for His coming. Thus, the productions of the intellect and imagination of Greece, though they utterly failed to regenerate the moral nature of man, had exercised and were exercising a marked power in quickening the minds of men in various countries to higher natural thoughts and feelings than before; and in that respect rendered it more possible to reason with them about divine realities, than if they had continued in their formerly stagnant, sunken, sensual state. The language of Greece, too, had become familiar to men in many lands, and by its fulness and precision, its force and clearness, formed the best vehicle for spreading the knowledge of the divine revelations and inspired writings over the earth. Then the very roads formed by the Roman government in all the regions, east and west, north and south, over which its imperial power extended, facilitated the journeyings of the messengers of Christ in their endeavours to preach the Gospel to every creature. The scattered condition of the Jews, likewise, secured, in almost every quarter of the Gentile world, the presence of those to whom, as knowing something of their own sacred writings, the preachers of the gospel could first appeal respecting the testimony to the Messiah that filled their prophetic books. Further, the resistless sway of Rome, and the reign of law and order, which, with stern, military discipline, it established and maintained over all its provinces, secured for a time a freedom of action to the preachers of the gospel and the missionaries of the cross wherever they went; a freedom of action indeed which otherwise they would have found greatly curtailed, or altogether denied to them. And, still further, at the time of Christ's birth, and for a period thereafter, the whole world was free,

strangely free, from the wars and rumours of wars that from age to age continually filled it, and that, if then prevalent, would have served too easily and effectually to distract the attention of mankind, and to paralyse the efforts of the teachers of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is a remarkable historical fact that the gates of the temple of Janus, which always stood open in time of war, and which had been closed only twice in the course of the previous seven hundred years, were for the third time shut when Christ was born ; a fact which indicated such a season of unwonted universal quietness, as the proper season for ushering into the world the Prince of Peace.

All things, therefore, in the history and condition of mankind, had at length converged to one point, a state of preparation for the advent of the Son of God. And then it was announced by messengers from heaven, and welcomed by those who were waiting for it on earth.

Suitable attestations of the advent.

When this event took place, all over the earth, the winds of human passion, and of startling judgments, were bound for a season. No wars or convulsions were desolating the world. But still this quietness was but a troubled calm. From the moral and physical, the public and private, the social and personal evils that were felt by mankind to be pressing on them, they were sighing for deliverance, even as if they somehow were being crushed with the conviction that their condition would speedily become desperate, unless deliverance came to them, they knew not whence or how. Yet even with, it is said, a presentiment of something about to happen, to meet the state of emergency in which all things were, both Jews and Gentiles understood not their own real condition, and the Deliverer whom they really required. And so "He was in the world, and the world was made

by Him, and the world knew Him not: He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

At the same time all heaven had become earnestly and actively engaged in connection with the Redeemer's advent; and saintly men and women on earth were made ready to witness and to welcome it. Gabriel, the mighty angel, who stands in the presence of God, and who, centuries before, had come to Daniel with messages from heaven on this very subject, appeared to Zecharias, the aged priest, as he ministered in the temple, and predicted to him the birth of a son by his aged wife Elizabeth, as the forerunner of the Son of God incarnate, to prepare His way. The same great angel came to Mary, and in reference to the human nature about to be assumed by the Son of God, when manifested in the flesh, told her that she should be His virgin mother.

Then too, in order that earthly witnesses might not be wanting to welcome the event, the Holy Ghost took possession of Mary, and enabled her, with unquestioning meekness and faith, to receive, and in due time report, the wonderful intelligence, that, by the immediate power of God put forth upon and within her, she would be the mother of her Lord. Afterwards, at a visit to her cousin Elizabeth, the latter, filled with the Holy Ghost, proclaimed her own condition as the destined mother of the Lord's forerunner, and addressed Mary as the destined mother of the Lord Himself; and Mary also, full of the Holy Ghost, broke forth into the loftiest adorations and praises of God her Saviour, for His mercy and faithfulness, in the fulfilment of His promises to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. Further, when the birth of the forerunner took place, his father, Zecharias, being freed from the temporary dumbness inflicted on him for his unbelief, in a song of praise, worthy of its object, and worthy of the divine inspirations which

prompted it, proclaimed the performance of the mercy promised to the fathers, and the immediate appearing of the Light of the world.

Thereafter, when He who is "the mighty God," became the "child born, and the Son given," to shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, watching over their flocks by night, an angel suddenly came from heaven with the glad news of the Saviour's birth; and at once there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill to men." And their praises were taken up, and echoed by saints on earth, when Jesus was brought to Jerusalem, and presented in the temple: for, at that moment, Simeon, a just and devout man, with the Holy Ghost upon him, came by the Spirit into the temple; and, finding the child Jesus, took Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation:" and then Anna, a prophetess, an aged widow, who departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers, night and day, coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. This last expression, "all them," &c., proves that there were others in the sacred city expecting and prepared to welcome the new-born Redeemer. Others still at a distance were being prepared to welcome Him; for wise men from the East, guided by a star, came from a distant region, and sought out the infant Saviour, till they found Him; and though they found Him with His mother in the lowliest condition, they fell down in His presence, and worshipped Him; and, opening their treasures, they presented to him their gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Even the enmity of Satan, and of his most powerful agents, was made to yield its testimony to the grandeur of

this event. For Herod the king, hearing the report of One born in Bethlehem, to be King of the Jews, in his malignant jealousy and fear of him as a possible rival for his throne, sent to Bethlehem and slew all the male children, from two years old and under, to make sure of the destruction of his intended victim. In this way, heaven, earth, and hell attested the greatness of the providence that had brought the Son of God into the world.

IV. *Some of the lessons of instruction connected with "God's sending of His Son in the fulness of the time."*

1. One great lesson to be learned from the sending of His Son "in the fulness of the time," is the certainty with which God will accomplish His purposes of everlasting love in the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ. The bulk of men, as we have seen, had been left to walk for four thousand years in their own ways, following their own counsels, fulfilling the desires of their own hearts. During that long period, at the same time, God preserved in a remnant the knowledge and fear of Himself, made them witnesses for His name, and so kept it from being forgotten by the sons of men. And these dispensations, partly of judgment, and partly of mercy, prepared the way for the coming of Him who alone is the salvation of the world. And the lesson thus taught is that the same faithful God will keep His covenant and mercy with them that love Him and that keep His commandments, to a thousand generations.¹

2. The coming of Christ has been followed by eighteen hundred years' accumulation of still more overwhelming evidence of human depravity, and of the sovereignty and riches of redeeming grace.

¹ Deut. vii.

The limited progress of the Gospel for eighteen hundred years, may not appear to human eyes a fitting result of the coming of Christ into the world. But all the while, it may be such a progress as will ultimately contribute most to the manifestation of the glory of God, and the furtherance of the highest good of the whole universe of created beings. God has a double end in view, in the work of redemption; to make manifest and memorable for ever, to all His intelligent creatures, the malignant nature and evil desert of sin, and by redeeming from it a multitude that no man can number, to secure the highest glory to His love, and to all His other perfections combined with His love, throughout eternal ages. In order to this, sin in men and devils is still allowed to work its ravages, and that in the very presence and by the abuse of all the mercy which the incarnation of the Son of God and the cross of Christ display; while, at the same time, redeeming grace continues to perpetuate and multiply its triumphs. In this double process, which proceeds apace upon the earth, multitudes alas! prove determined and are allowed to rush upon destruction, while increasing numbers are being gathered to Christ. But while the desolation and ruin wrought by sin may for a little longer be continued, and may even become more terrible, we know that the Sun of righteousness is about to rise on the world's darkness and scatter it, and to fill the earth with His glory. And when at length the work of redemption is completed, the darkness and wailings of the offenders and workers of iniquity, who have been cast out of the kingdom, shall be lost in the light and gladness of the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

3. The filling of the earth with the glory of Christ as the incarnate God and Saviour, is, it would seem, to be even yet, and now indeed more grievously than ever, preceded by

such self-destroying courses on the part of mankind, as will make history to repeat itself in a more impressive manner than ever, as regards both the workings and evidence of human depravity, and the interpositions and triumphs of redeeming love. Not only are the millions on millions in heathendom, destined, so far as they are left to themselves, to abide in their degraded and wretched state, and to demonstrate the falsehood and folly of the doctrine of natural development, as applied to account for and explain the progress of true religion in this world—not only are the followers of the false prophet so enveloped in the smoke of the Mahometan imposture, as to be for ever unable, by any effort of their own, to look out, and to look up for the Sun of righteousness to rise upon them with healing in His beams—not only are the Jews in every land so self-blinded in mind, and so self-hardened in heart, as to be, so far as mere human persuasion is concerned, invincible enemies of the true God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, and friends and promoters of the deadliest errors and habits that can prey on themselves and on human society—not only are the myriad victims of the papacy given over to strong delusions to believe a lie, and held fast as willing slaves of a priesthood, who are, in every land, banded conspirators against the truth and honour of God, and against all true freedom, purity, and happiness: but even in lands where the Bible is freely circulated, and the gospel of Christ is made known, and its ordinances are extensively set up and maintained, great and growing numbers of all classes, from the highest to the humblest, are embracing, avowing, and inculcating the grossest and most debasing forms of infidelity and of atheism. God and Christ, the word and statutes of God, and the claims of the sabbath, and all divine and eternal verities, are being shut out from the councils of nations, and from the laws of

civil society, and from teaching hours in the whole of the public schools throughout the land for the training of the young, from spheres of business and haunts of pleasure, and from every department of social life. Yea, and the very churches, to which Christ has committed the keeping of His testimony, are proving false to their trust, admitting doctrines and practices to have free course among them, which provoke the withdrawment of His presence and blessing, and which are fraught with spiritual decay and death. If nations and churches and families in a land are to reap as they sow, what shall the end of such things be in Christendom? Will it be matter for surprise if the end be a breaking-up of churches and earthly kingdoms, that shall exceed in its woes the dissolution of ancient empires, and of the nation of Israel itself, alike as a church and as a commonwealth?

Nor let professing christians overlook their individual relationships and responsibilities. The apathy of the many will not arrest, but only hasten, the terrible results with which that apathy is to be followed. The self-righteousness and outward forms in which not a few are seeking safety, shall be swept from around them in the day of trial as refuges of lies. And none shall escape but those who are brought to Christ, and abide in Him as the ark of salvation.

Do not suppose, however, that Christ is losing His hold of the world, though the multitudes high and low who fill it have never known Him, or, having known Him, or known about Him, are letting go their hold of Him, and drifting on a shoreless sea of evils, without chart or compass or polar star. For while, with almighty ease controlling and disposing of all His enemies, however multitudinous or powerful, He has, in these and in many other lands, His faithful followers, to whom His presence is life and strength,

His word and example are law, the maintenance and extension of His kingdom are the main work of their days upon the earth, and the assured approaching triumphs of His cross are the object of their inspiring hopes, and the daily burden of their songs of praise. The number of these faithful witnesses is being increased, and they will be found, by His Spirit given to them, united to Christ and to each other in His service, and standing firmly on His side, and for His truth and cause, when the powers and agencies of earth have combined and are engaged in their final conflict with Christ. "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful."¹ And when His enemies perish, and His kingdom and glory fill the earth, His faithful servants shall take their place among the great multitude, whose voice, like that of great waters and mighty thunders, shall be heard, saying, "Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

To every soul of man this is infinitely the most pressing of all questions, Are you in Christ, and on His side? Blessed are you if ye know whom you have believed, and are persuaded that He will keep that which you have committed to Him against that day. Woe is unto you, if left to yourself to live on, without Christ, without God, and without hope.

¹ Rev. xvii.

IX.

THE INCARNATION: ITS DESIGNS AND RESULTS.

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”—GAL. iv. 4, 5.

The doctrine in the words of Scripture and in a human formula.

“**B**EHOLD a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and call His name Emmanuel;”¹ *Emmanuel* meaning *God with us*. “Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; . . . and His name shall be called . . . the mighty God.”² The angel Gabriel came to Mary, and said, “Fear not . . . behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and call His name Jesus. . . . The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing (progeny) which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.”³ “The Word which was in the beginning, which was with God, and was God;” the Word “by whom all things were made;” “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us: and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”⁴ “Being in the form of God . . . He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”⁵ The doctrine taught in these and similar passages, and in our text, is well expressed in the Shorter Catechism: “The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ,

¹ Isa. vii.

² Isa. ix.

³ Luke i.

⁴ John i.

⁵ Phil. ii.

who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man, in two distinct natures and one person, for ever." "Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to Himself a true body, and a reasonable soul: being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin."

I. THE NATURE AND MANNER OF THE INCARNATION; AND THE EXPLANATION WHICH IT AFFORDS OF MANY DIVERSE, AND SOME SEEMINGLY CONFLICTING THINGS IN THE HISTORY OF CHRIST.

1. It was *actually our nature* that He took. He took a true body and a reasonable soul. The body which He took was not, as some false teachers in other days affirmed, a mere appearance and pretence of a body: it was as true a human body as that of any other man; being "flesh and blood," "the seed of Abraham," "made of a woman." Not less truly did He take a reasonable human soul; though other early teachers of error held that He had no human soul, but only a human body, united to His deity, He had a human soul like ours, a soul that became exceeding sorrowful even unto death.

2. His body was formed out of the substance of the Virgin Mary; nevertheless, although she was a fallen, sinful child of Adam, as are all the children of men, He was born of her, yet *without sin*. (1.) The Popish Church has, indeed, decreed it to be a truth necessary to be believed, in order to salvation, that Mary was herself born without sin, and was ever after free from it. This decree was passed to furnish ground for the divine power which they claim for her. They have thus in reality destroyed the foundation of our hope as sinners. For if she had no sin, she is not one of Adam's posterity, who have all sinned and died in

him;¹ and in that case, taking His human nature from her would not have allied Him with us at all, so as to enable Him, or place Him in circumstances, to take our guilt, and to redeem us from our lost condition. But Mary, like all other mere human creatures, was a partaker of both original and actual sin, needed the same redemption as any other sinner needs, in order to being made a child of God, and offered the same praises for her redemption as others do, saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." (2.) Christ Himself, however, though born of a sinful woman, was born of her without sin. If sin had been in Him, He could not have been an atoning surety, substitute, and sacrifice, for us. But He was preserved from all sin by the Holy Spirit's immediate operation in forming His body in the virgin. (3.) At the same time, sinless and holy as His humanity was, it was really formed of the substance of Mary. She was not, as some false teachers, of high spiritual pretensions, are declaring, the mere channel, through which, what they call a heavenly humanity, was born into the world. This doctrine is as fatal to His capability of becoming an atonement for sin, as is the Popish doctrine of Mary's immaculateness. In respect of His human nature, Christ was as truly the Son of Mary, as any man is the son of the mother that bore him. "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same."

3. The assumption of our nature into union with His divine person, by Christ, has created a union between His divine nature and His human nature, of an altogether peculiar kind and character, differing from all other unions. There is nothing like it, and probably there never will be anything like it, in the universe. Having taken a true

¹ Rom. v. ; I Cor. xv.

body and a reasonable soul, He was, and continues to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever. Let us notice the difference between this and all other unions that can be mentioned in connection with it.

(1.) It differs from the union of the three persons in the Godhead. That is a necessary, essential, eternal, uncreated, self-existing union of three divine persons in the one divine nature: the Father being in the Son, and the Son in the Father; the Father and the Son being in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit being in the Father and the Son. But this union of divinity and humanity in Christ is a created union, the effect of the operation of divine wisdom and power. The union of Father, Son, and Spirit, in one God is that of three persons in one essence: the union of divinity and humanity in Christ is that of two natures in one person. The one is an essential union of three distinct persons in one nature: the other a union in the same person, of diverse natures, the divine and human; of natures that, while personally united, remain essentially and substantially distinct, and therefore it is peculiarly a personal union.

(2.) The union of Christ's two natures in His one person differs from the union of soul and body in man. When the soul and body of a man are united, the union makes a new person; but when Christ united His human to His divine nature, He did not become a new person; He remained the same divine person as before, and only took human nature into personal subsistence with Himself. Neither the soul nor the body of man has any personal subsistence before their union. But the eternal personality of Christ is the foundation of the union of His human with His divine nature, in His one person.

(3.) This union of Christ's divine and human natures in His one person differs from all those unions or transfor-

mations which are formed by mixing things that naturally differ into one composition, as when a draught is made up by mixing different substances together ; or by converting one substance into another, as when Aaron's rod was turned into a serpent, or when the water was turned into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. No such mixture, and no such conversion of substances, divine or human, took place, to constitute the union of Christ's divine and human natures in His one person. His two natures were not mixed to form a new nature distinct from both. Neither was either nature converted into the other, so that His divine nature became His human, or His human nature became His divine. His divine and human natures, while eternally united, remain eternally distinct in His one person.

(4.) This union of Christ's divine and human natures differs from the spiritual union between Christ and believers. Close as the union of Christ and believers is, and more and more intimate as it is destined to become, it is still, and ever must remain, a union of persons distinct from each other, of persons having each an individual, and distinctly personal subsistence of his own. But the union in virtue of which Christ became God-man, is not a union of two persons ; for He never existed as a human person at all, inasmuch as when He took our nature, He took it into personal subsistence with His divine nature. This union, therefore, entirely differs from His union with believers. And the difference can be seen in various ways. Thus, though Christ by His Spirit dwells in a measurable degree in believers, in Himself, as God-man, the immeasurable fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. That is, His entire divine nature is in His humanity ; but that can be only by His human nature being taken into union with His divine, by His appropriating, as a divine person, His human nature as His own ; by His taking His human nature into

indissoluble personal union with Himself. Again, so emphatically does the Bible represent Christ as a divine person with two natures, that what was done by Him in virtue of His humanity, and by means of it, is said to have been done by Himself as a divine person. "The WORD was made FLESH." "GOD purchased the Church with HIS OWN BLOOD." "HE laid down HIS life for us." In short, when "the WORD was made FLESH," He did not cease to be God, by becoming man. Neither did He, by becoming man, become two distinct persons. He remained one person still, and took His human nature into indissoluble union with Himself, in His one person, as God's eternal Son.

We have seen that it was actually our nature that the Son of God assumed—that it was taken from one of our fallen race, and yet was so formed in her by the power of God that it was in Him without sin—and that the union formed between His divine and human natures in His one person differs entirely from all other unions with which it can be compared. But now,

4. Towards understanding the nature and manner of the incarnation, it is important to consider and keep in mind, what the nature of the case implies, and the Scriptures indicate, regarding the kind of communion that takes place between the two natures of Christ, as united in His one person. And

(1.) There are communications of the divine nature to the human in Christ. *First.* His human nature has such an interest in His divine, that it subsists in His divine person as its own. *Second.* His human nature is filled by the Spirit which is given to Him without measure: and it is not for us to measure the consequent extent of His knowledge and understanding, and the consequent force and far-reaching power of His affections as a man. *Third.* All His mediatorial actings, performed by His human nature, had a

divine worth and dignity attached to them by the divine nature which belongs to Him.

(2.) There are things common, or belonging equally, though in different ways, to both His divine and His human nature. Thus, *First*. Each nature in Christ preserves its own characteristics without imparting them to the other nature. His divine nature does not impart its perfections to His human nature; and His human nature does not impart its properties to His divine nature. *Second*. Each of the distinct natures in Christ operates according to its own essential properties. His divine nature knows, upholds, and rules all creatures and all their movements, acting by its presence always and everywhere throughout the universe. His human nature is born, grows, obeys, suffers, dies, and rises again. But all the while it is the same Christ, the same divine person, that acts all these parts; the one nature being no less His than the other. Wherefore, *Third*. All His actings as Mediator, prophet, priest, and king, by whichever of His natures performed, are to be viewed as the actings of His whole person, or, as God-man, in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever.

5. Another fact in reference to the incarnation to be remembered is, that the union of Christ's two natures in His one person occasions many diverse, and even some seemingly conflicting yet really consistent utterances in Scripture respecting Him. Thus—

(1.) Things are spoken of HIS PERSON that properly belong to one of His natures only; as when, with reference to His divine nature, it is said, "The Word was with God, and was God;" "Before Abraham was, I AM;" or as when, with reference to His human nature, it is said, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given;" "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

(2.) Things are spoken of Him that do not belong to*

either His divine or His human nature exclusively, but that belong to Him as uniting both of these natures in His one person; as, for instance, when He is spoken of as Head of the Church, its Prophet, Priest, and King.

(3.) While His person is at times called by a *name* derived from one of His natures, to that nature are ascribed properties and acts belonging to His other nature; as in the following instances, "crucified the Lord of glory;" *God* purchased the Church with His blood; "the Son of Man which is in heaven."

(4.) Sometimes again, when His person is denominated from *one* of His natures, to Him is ascribed at the same time that which is common to both. Thus, "As concerning the flesh, CHRIST came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Here, while called "GOD OVER ALL," because of His divine nature, both His divine and human nature are engaged in His entering as CHRIST on His incarnate state.

(5.) Yet again, there are cases in which He takes His name from BOTH His natures, while that which is said of Him properly belongs only to one of them. As in the words, "What think ye of *Christ*? Whose SON is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord? saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. If David then call Him *Lord*, how is He his Son?" The designation which He takes to Himself of "Christ," and that which David gives Him, "My Lord," refer to His two natures, the divine and human, in His one person, as the God-man, the Redeemer. But the relation ascribed to Him of "*Son* of David," belongs only to His human nature, derived from David, "of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." And so,

(6.) Statements in Scripture respecting Christ, that are not only diverse but apparently conflicting, are thus seen to

be perfectly consistent. Thus, He disclaimed the knowledge of the day of His second coming, and of final redemption,¹ and yet in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.² It is said, "He was crucified through weakness,"³ and yet He Himself declares, "I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from Me; but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down; and I have power to take it again."⁴ All apparent contradictions, in short, in His character and history, are solved by His incarnation. For, in virtue of it, He is placed before us in one or other of three distinct aspects in Scripture, viz., *first*, as "GOD OVER ALL;" or, *second*, as a MAN, in everything except our sinfulness; or, *third*, as GOD-MAN, mediator between God and men, taking our sin—suffering for it—magnifying and making honourable the law by His obedience, and so furnishing a righteousness that makes the sinner just—and, as Head of the Church, and over all things to the Church, giving to it all ordinances—and putting His Spirit into all its true members—ruling over heaven, earth, and hell for His people's sake—and guiding, governing, and preserving them, till He gathers them in safety into His presence for ever. Not to speak of what we find in proof of this in other parts of the Holy Scriptures, the four Gospels are records filled with facts that prove and illustrate the statements just made. Take a few specimens. In one discourse, Jesus speaks of Himself as GOD; "Before Abraham was, I AM." He speaks of Himself as MAN; "When the Son of Man is lifted up," that is, on the cross. And He speaks of Himself as the GOD-MAN-REDEEMER; "I am the Light of the world."⁵ In another discourse He declares Himself DIVINE; "One with the Father:" HUMAN; "giving

¹ Mark xiii.

² Col. i.

³ 2 Cor. xiii.

⁴ John x.

⁵ John viii.

His life for the sheep:" and DIVINE-HUMAN; "giving them eternal life."¹ At the grave of Lazarus, He "wept," as the Man of sorrows—as Redeemer, He avowed Himself "the resurrection and the life"—and He accepted Martha's confession of Him as the eternal "Son of God."² At the last passover, He feasted as a man with His disciples—He spoke to them as God, in having chosen them to salvation—and as Mediator, He appointed to them a kingdom.³ In His consolatory discourse to, and His prayer for, His disciples, He speaks of His human nature going from earth to heaven—of His divine nature in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was—and of the two natures united in His person and work as Redeemer, in His promises to intercede for His people with the Father, to send down the Spirit, and to bless them on earth with His own continued presence and fellowship.⁴ *Finally*, His agony and death proclaim His manhood—the glory to Himself and His people that followed, proclaims the divine dignity of the sufferer, as uniting the divine with the human nature in His one person—and His assumption and exercise of all power in heaven and on earth until He comes again as Judge of all, imply and prove His coequality and coeternity with the Father.

If any one of these aspects of Christ's character is denied or ignored, the gospel history of Him cannot be understood or even received as true in all its parts. Hence the dreadful havoc that rationalists and freethinkers are making of the gospel history of the character and work of Jesus, and of the hopes of men. If sinful men are to be brought into saving acquaintance with the Christ of the gospels, they must be taught to reverence Him as *God*, as well as to have sympathy with His character and actings as a *man* ;

¹ John x.² Luke xi.³ Luke xxii. ; John xiii.⁴ John xiv.-xvii.

and to live by faith in His cleansing blood, and justifying righteousness, and sanctifying grace, as their *Redeemer and Lord*. They must learn to know, believe, realise, and live upon, the truths embodied in such scriptures as these. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "All things were made by Him." "By Him all things consist." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

II. THE DESIGN AND RESULTS OF THE INCARNATION.

"MADE UNDER THE LAW, TO REDEEM THEM THAT WERE UNDER THE LAW, THAT WE MIGHT RECEIVE THE ADOPTION OF SONS."

Modern pretenders to thought, enlightenment, and culture, are telling us, some of them from the pulpit, that Christ's great mission on earth was to set an example of human goodness; and that the way of our redemption from evil, and attainment to all good, lies in our imitation of His virtues. They thus reduce the work of Christ on earth to furnishing the moral pattern which His life presents. So far as God is concerned, they thus deny that the claims of His inflexible justice, law, and government, had anything to do with Christ's mission. They reduce it to a mere testimony on His part of God's fatherly love, in which all men are alike and equally embraced. This is the modern gospel, which, in proportion as it is entertained, will quickly operate to the destruction of every essential peculiarity of the Gospel of Christ. According to this modern gospel, there was no need for the incarnation—there is no need of an infinite atonement for sin—there is no such curse of the

law, no such wrath in God against transgression, no such evil in sin, as is affirmed. The attainment of self-redemption is within the reach of every one's own efforts. The proper divinity of Christ, as one of three persons in the Godhead, and the divinity and personality of the Spirit as another, turn into fancies, in the eyes of such advanced thinkers. And all the peculiarities of the gospel, so earnestly preached, and so gladly embraced for ages, vanish like a dream. Yet as the Apostle exclaimed, when he heard of the Galatians being perverted from the truth by false teachers that had got in among them, so would we repeat his exclamation, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you . . . let him be accursed." For what is the gospel? Even that in the fulness of the time, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman; made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. That very Son acted under the previous dispensations of divine grace, not only as Jehovah, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God of Israel, but as the angel of God, the Jehovah angel, the angel and messenger of the covenant. Angel means one sent. And we find Him repeatedly spoken of in the Old Testament writings as Jehovah sent by Jehovah. His being sent, therefore, did not mean that He was inferior in His nature to Him that sent Him: it only meant that in the covenant of redemption, what the Father laid upon Him to do and suffer, in our nature, for our salvation, He voluntarily undertook. But, having undertaken this work, He necessarily assumed the position of a servant in performing it. And so He was sent into the world at last, and sent "made of a woman"; while He not less truly came of His own free and sovereign will, and freely undertook, out of love to the sinners given into His hands, by His own obedience unto death for them, to work out and

purchase their present and everlasting redemption. Having thus appeared in our nature, let us see what followed to Him.

1. He was "made under the law to redeem them that were under the law," and so discharged all their obligations to it as to secure for His people, in time and in eternity, higher blessings than would have been theirs had they remained unfallen, and personally honoured and satisfied all the law's demands. For, *First*, In behalf of His redeemed, being "made under the law," He rendered in our nature an absolutely perfect obedience to the whole law of God. As creatures of God, and subjects of His law and government, our obligation was to "continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" and the condition of His favour was "the man that doeth them shall live in them." That obligation all have violated; that condition of divine favour all have broken; and all the world has become guilty before God. Yet if this perfect obedience to His law is not forthcoming, there can be no favour shown by God; for His character, perfections, law, and government are all unchangeable, and render it impossible for intelligent and accountable creatures to live in His presence except on the footing of a perfect fulfilment of all His commandments. But being "made under the law," Christ "fulfilled all righteousness," all the law's righteous demands, for them that believe. And so "by His obedience they are made righteous;" and "receiving thus the gift of righteousness, they reign in life by Jesus Christ."¹ *Second*, He was made under the law to redeem them from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them. He drew upon Himself the wrath due to His people, and was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their

¹ Rom. v.

iniquities. So that now in Him they have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. And they say, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me. Behold . . . Jehovah is my strength and song; He also is become my salvation." And *Third*, Not only has Christ, being made under the law, rendered to it a perfect obedience for His people, and so furnished an everlasting ground of their acceptance with God—not only has He at the same time endured and exhausted for them the wrath and curse due to them as transgressors—but He has made way for their deliverance, their redemption from that dominion and reign of sin in and over them, which is part of the curse of the law lying on sinners. As the precious blood with which He has bought them, entitles them to deliverance from their natural bondage to sin and Satan and the world, so, having purchased them with His blood, He puts forth His mighty power and actually accomplishes their deliverance. He gives to every one of them grace, according to the measure of His gift. Having ascended on high leading captivity captive, He has received gifts for men, which He bestows even on the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell among them.¹ He saves to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.² In the exercise of "all power given to Him in heaven and in earth," He gives to His redeemed the word and its ordinances, and regulates for their welfare all His providential dealings, and sends into them His Spirit, and so begins and carries on to completion within them His work of grace. The results are an entire change in their moral and spiritual nature, character, condition, and destiny. They see and feel

¹ Ps. lxxviii. ; Eph. iv.

² Heb. vii.

their sin and misery. They see Jesus. They look to Him and rest on Him for their salvation. They receive the offers and tokens of pardoning mercy. They are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. The reigning power of sin in and over them is destroyed. Satan is cast out of them. They are delivered from this present evil world. They are crucified with Christ; nevertheless they live; yet not they, but Christ liveth in them; and the life which they live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God who loved them, and gave Himself for them. They are quickened together with Christ, and sit with Him in heavenly places, even while they are still on earth.¹ Risen with Him, they seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. They set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth; for they are dead (that is, dead to earthly things as their portion), and their life is hid with Christ in God. And when Christ who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with Him in glory.²

2. The signally gracious ultimate design of Christ in being made of a woman, made under the law, and in redeeming them that were under the law, is "that they might receive the adoption of sons." As regards the position of the redeemed in Christ, it is not anything like the whole truth to say that, in virtue of His incarnation, followed by His obedience unto death, they, being in Him by faith, are forgiven all their sins through His blood, and accepted as righteous in His righteousness, and find Him the Life of their souls. The redeemed, it is conceivable, might experience that change of their relationship to God, and of their condition before Him, and yet be lifted up into no higher a state than that of creatures saved from the ruins

¹ Eph. ii.

² Col. iii.

of the fall, restored to the service of God, and, as *servants*, yielding to Him the subjection which His law requires from all the works of His creative and sustaining hand. But a higher place, rank, and destiny are secured by the Incarnate Redeemer for His redeemed. They are made by Him not servants merely, but sons of God. The Son of God became one with them in taking their nature, and then in taking on Him all their obligations and liabilities, all their sins and miseries. He thus became one with them that He might not only redeem them from all evil, and secure to them all the good promised at first to their obedience, but bring them into such a perpetual oneness with Himself, that all that belongs to Him as the Son of God, so far as it is communicable, may be theirs as joint sons of God with Christ Himself. They are thus made heirs of God Himself through Christ, "All things are theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Taken out of the world and adopted in Christ into the family of God, they are led by His Spirit; they have access to His person; their petitions are answered; provision is made for their wants; they are protected from evil; they are taught of God; they are sanctified by the truth; they are graciously corrected for their faults; they are comforted in their sorrows; they are raised above the power and fear of death; they depart to be with Christ; they are destined to a holy and happy resurrection; they shall have for their inheritance the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and they shall have fulness of joy in the presence of God, and pleasures at His right hand for evermore.

III. In what is here said of the incarnation, of its nature, manner, designs, and results, we have the great message of God, His one alternative of weal or of woe to men through all ages, to the end of time. The testimony

to be borne on earth to the incarnation and redeeming work of the Son of God, is the *one great message* from heaven to our sinful race. The message was first spoken by the Lord Himself in the announcement of the seed of the woman that would bruise the head of the serpent. It was repeated in terms more or less specific to patriarchs and prophets. It was kept before all generations of the Jewish Church, in the manifold types and prophecies which symbolised or foretold the actual appearance and work of the Messiah on earth, when the time fixed for His appearance should arrive. And when "in the fulness of the time God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," the testimony to the world henceforth became a testimony for the great redemption, as at length actually accomplished, a testimony to all nations, in which all mankind have the most overwhelming interest, through all generations, to the end of time. Insomuch, that to every man this Gospel must prove either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.

The incarnation, with what we thus see to be included in it, is, in fact, the great central event in the world's history. To it all previous events converged. From it all subsequent events have taken, and will continue to take, their shape and character. The incarnation determined the history of the world for four thousand years before it took place. It is now determining all the events of the world's history, onward to the day of final judgment. It is "the Gospel of the kingdom," a kingdom consisting of all the redeemed followers of Christ on earth: and while all other and earthly kingdoms rise and fall around it, it shall abide, and advance, and prosper more and more till the end of time. More than that, the fate of all earthly kingdoms themselves, as well as of their inhabitants individually, is

determined by their relation to Christ, and to the interests of His Gospel and His Church.

It is impossible to overrate the manifold emphatic way in which the well-being of our race is bound up with the good news of the divine incarnate Redeemer. This gospel alone operates to make men truly virtuous; for to regenerate human nature is neither the result nor the object of any other system of religion, or of morals, or of politics, known on earth; while this is the one great design of Christianity, and its actual effect in all who truly receive it; and Christian teachers have no divine warrant to act as such, except they are themselves divinely renewed; while the teachers of any other system are not required to experience, any more than to enforce, such a renewal. Further, great truths concerning the character and providence of God, the immortal nature and destiny of man, and the realities of the unseen and eternal worlds, truths, which apart from the gospel, the wisest of this world's children are unable to comprehend or embrace, are yet by the gospel made so plain and familiar as to be received in faith and love by the young and the simple. Further still, apart from the gospel there are no effectual motives to the cultivation and practice of virtue, inasmuch as any idea that may enter the minds of men from any other source, is far too dim and indefinite to restrain from evil; while, on the other hand, there is arresting and controlling power in the direct and awful warning of the gospel to every individual sinner, "the soul that sinneth it shall die;" "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Still further, apart from the gospel, sinners have no proper inducements, or helps, to lead or to enable them truly to grieve over their sin, and hate it, and turn from it, living and dying; whereas in the Gospel of Christ, the most powerful and touching considerations are presented, to soften and subdue the hardened while they are in health,

and even when they have reached the last moments of ebbing life. And yet again, the teachings and works of Christ recorded in the gospel narratives, have exerted a marvellous, a divine power, in the moral and spiritual renewal of multitudes, and in placing under salutary restraints multitudes more; while all other systems of belief and of morals, and all other teachings and examples of men apart from the gospel, have never had any power to repair or withstand the ravages of sin throughout the earth.

The more we meditate upon the nature and results of the truths and lessons inculcated by the Great Teacher, and contrast with them the maxims and customs of all nations that have not had, or that have refused the gospel, the more impressive becomes the redeeming work of the incarnate Son. Apart from the gospel, as dimly revealed to patriarchs and prophets, and clearly and fully taught by Christ Himself and by His apostles, the true character of God and of His government has ever been, and is unknown. Apart from the gospel, the true nature, proper ends, and inestimable value of the three great divine institutions for the good of this world, viz., the family, civil society, and the Church, are unknown. Apart from the gospel, the true value of human life, of the life of infants, of the life of all, yea even of our own life, is unknown. Apart from the gospel, the proper enlightenment, elevation, and freedom of the masses are unknown. Apart from the gospel, the hideousness of war, and the hatred and the avoidance of it that are incumbent, are unknown. Apart from the gospel, the practice of truth and holy love, and the creation and maintenance of the charitable and beneficent institutions that cover even a half-christianised land like this, are unknown. Apart from the gospel, the preservation of the proper purity of the relationship in which the sexes stand to each other, is unknown. Truly is it said of the

godliness which the gospel alone is the means of infusing into men, that it is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

When speaking thus of the gospel, let us repeat again, and let it be remembered, that we mean the grand old gospel, with its full embodiment of the perfections of the Deity, the utter sinfulness and misery of mankind, the person, the atoning work, and the meritorious obedience of the divine Surety and Saviour, the regenerating and sanctifying grace of the eternal Spirit, the blessings of redemption, deliverance from the present and future misery of the impenitent, and the gift of eternal life in Christ. And we do not mean by the gospel, that very modern compound of affected culture and pretentious rationalism, which, under the character of the modern gospel, is deceiving the conceited and shallow wits of the present day, with what is really nothing better than baptized heathenism. The true gospel is that revealed love of God in Christ, which at once gives glory to God, and secures peace to men. The incarnation of the Son of God was the signal that He had at length come to accomplish both of these ends, and for that purpose, to purchase with a great price His mediatorial sovereignty over the earth, and take possession of it, and to govern it by His promised presence and resistless power, until He has gathered out of all generations, the myriads of His ransomed, and taken them to His presence above, and allowed all others to ripen themselves for their impending doom.

Infidelity, under a variety of imposing names and forms, such as scientific investigation, higher criticism, free-thought, greater culture, has taken the place of old paganism, in its enmity to this the only true gospel of Christ. And it is busily employing its varied knowledge, and opportunities,

the arts of life, the various sciences, so far as they can be plausibly perverted to its service, its printing presses, and all other instrumentalities on which it can lay a sacrilegious hand, to discredit the gospel of Christ. But Christians do not really need to give way to fear. For infidelity cannot succeed in its designs, beyond the limited and temporary success, which, in just judgment, God permits to it. It cannot succeed further than that, so long as there is a God in heaven to set bounds to it, so long as Christ has all power in heaven and in earth. To all the ragings of infidelity, as to the ragings of the sea, the Lord says, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Infidelity cannot succeed, so long as there remains in men a natural conscience to reprove their sin, to warn them of their danger, and to set before them their need of an atonement for their manifold transgressions and iniquities.

It will baffle all the management and power of the infidel host, so much as to blot out the time of the incarnation as the great central era of the world. As regards the historic dates of all that happened on the earth before the coming of Christ, and of all that has happened since, and is to happen to the world's end, The Year of the Birth of Jesus Christ shall be the one note of all the ages. Moreover, it will baffle infidelity to blot out of the records of earth, or out of men's convictions, the fact that the gospel, of which the incarnation forms the centre, is the infinitely greatest blessing vouchsafed to mankind—that, if permitted to operate, it would do away with idolatry, and profaneness, and unnatural and abominable lusts, with hideous lewdness, with bloody cruelty, with all forms of injustice, with endless falsehood and fraud, and would spread over the earth piety and purity, and righteousness, and truth and kindness, and all the blessings that follow in their train.

Wicked and misguided men, indeed, may be allowed to do much against the gospel. In spite of all its calls, they may corrupt, ruin, and destroy themselves, when the Gospel would save them. They may destroy the sabbath, and cause the sound of the gospel to be scarcely heard in a land. They may put an end, in a great measure, to any effectual religious education of the young. They may destroy the influence of christianity over human laws, and turn civil government into a government of unmingled secularity, and of practical atheism. They may destroy the very foundations on which alone the good order of civil society, the self-denial of its members, their mutual sacrifices for the common welfare, and continued social peace, can rest. And they may end in blotting out their country from the map of christian nations, and next from the map of nations altogether. But one thing they cannot do. They cannot prevent christianity, when driven out of one land, and forsaking it, from rising in another.

Nay, even in a favoured land like this, people may get weary of the gospel, as the Galatians did, and begin to accept of substitutes that are more pleasing to their sensual nature and their pride of heart, while they take from the Redeemer's personal glory, or take away the true nature of His atonement and righteousness, or set aside the power of His grace, or deny the integrity and authority of His word, or supplant His ordinances by their own flesh-pleasing inventions. It may be that a young and rising generation, instead of being taught, and knowing, and loving the gospel, and rising up to prove its faithful witnesses and confessors, shall lay themselves open to the new and strange doctrines that are everywhere filling the air, and so rise up into a generation of free-thinkers and sabbath-breakers, and loose and careless, or free-and-easy livers. And as a just judgment from God, they may be left to run

their evil course, and to go to their evil doom. And then, in mercy to a land, so married as this land is to God by the piety and sufferings of the past, another generation may be reclaimed to Christ, and made to catch up the old story of the gospel, which is also always new; and to feel its transforming power, and bring forth its fruits, and so find the prayer answered, "Return, O Lord, how long? And let it repent Thee, concerning Thy servants. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it."

But be the efforts of the enemies of the gospel, and the results of their efforts what they may; and come what may of this or that nation, or of all nations, in reference to the gospel; one thing is certain: when the Son of God was made of a woman, He came from heaven to earth to redeem all who had been given to Him in the everlasting covenant; and having purchased them at a great price, He assumed, and now wields, a sovereignty over the earth, which He is never to resign, or for a moment to relax, until He has prepared all His chosen to be gathered up into His presence, and cast out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity.

X.

DEATH ABOLISHED, AND LIFE AND IMMORTALITY BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

“Our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”—
2 TIM. i. 10.

PAUL, now a prisoner at Rome for the gospel, writes to his dearly beloved son Timothy, urging him to steadfastness in the service of Christ, amidst whatever trials or sufferings might come upon him on its account. He urges this by reminding him of the grace already bestowed upon them, and by the prospects of glory that were full in their view. Their holy and blessed calling of God to this state, and to these prospects, had its origin in that sovereign purpose of grace in behalf of the redeemed, which He had made over to them in Christ Jesus before the world began. That grace, after being for ages revealed with comparative dimness through the medium of promises and prophecies, of types and figures, was now made manifest, made to shine out plainly to the eyes of faith, and in the happy experience of regenerated souls, by the actual incarnation of the Saviour Jesus Christ, as God manifested in the flesh, and in the salvation and eternal life which He had purchased and wrought out, proclaimed and made secure, by His personal ministry on the earth, His obedience unto death, His resurrection from the grave, and His ascension to the right hand of power. This redemption from sin and death, this restoration to a divine life on earth, and this final and speedy entrance into eternal life on high, formed the burden of that gospel, which Paul and Timothy, and all like-minded,

had embraced and were preaching, as God's message of mercy to this world of sinners. Any kind of labours, suffering, or death might well be welcomed by those who lived and died preaching the good news that our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

The two statements which we would now consider are that Christ has abolished death, and that He has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.

I. HE HATH ABOLISHED DEATH.

1. What is the death which He has abolished? Whatever enters into the state and prospects of men as sinners is included in this death. (1.) They are dead to all true happiness. They are without God in the world.¹ They live under that wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.² This displeasure of God poisons and embitters all their temporal mercies. Cursed are they in the city and in the field. Cursed is their basket and their store. Cursed is the fruit of their body, and the fruit of their land.³ (2.) They are dead to the love and service of God; dead in trespasses and sins.⁴ (3.) Their bodies die and return to corruption. (4.) They are liable to eternal death. At the voice of Christ, their bodies shall come forth at last to the resurrection of condemnation.⁵ And their final portion shall be the blackness of darkness,⁶ and the everlasting fire.⁷

All mankind are naturally in this state of death. Whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.⁸ Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.⁹

¹ Eph. ii.

² Rom. i.

³ Deut. xxviii.

⁴ Eph. ii.

⁵ John v.

⁶ Jude.

⁷ Matt. xxv.

⁸ Rom. iii.

⁹ Rom. v.

Men, as sinners, are in this state of death by their own voluntary self-consignment to it. They choose death rather than life. Their carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be.¹ They despise His excellence and majesty. They disregard His eye. They question His wisdom. They set at nought His power. They dispute His justice. They trifle with His mercy. They disbelieve His truth. They depart from their Maker, live in enmity to their Preserver, abuse the gifts of their unwearied Benefactor, assail the sovereignty and rights of their Lawgiver and Judge, and lightly esteem the Rock of their salvation.

In this state of spiritual death men naturally live throughout their entire earthly existence. Shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, it pervades their whole nature and history. It breaks out at all stages of life. It actuates them in every situation. It defiles every place where they are found. It wastes their seasons for getting good. It makes them to live without God. It wastes their time. It is leading them toward ruin. It can hurry them into any evil. It keeps them persisting in its indulgence alike against the terrors and the tender mercies of God, against their own convictions and professions. It holds them back from union with God's holy and happy family, and leagues them with His enemies. It destroys their influence for good, and renders them not only faithless but injurious to all about them. And it keeps them in bondage as its servants, until they find what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

All who live out their earthly existence, and leave the world in this state of death, are shut out of the gracious presence of God, and of the Lamb, and of the society and

¹ Rom. viii.

services of His holy and happy family, and are consigned to the final impenitence and woe of an ever-living death.

2. How has Christ abolished this death to all His ransomed ?

(1.) The wrath and curse of God due to them for sin, is taken away by Christ. He hath redeemed them from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for them.¹ By what He suffered in their stead, the penalty due to their sin is borne, and exhausted ; the justice of God, which their offences provoked, is satisfied ; the holiness of God, which their sin so dishonoured, is gloriously displayed ; the moral government of God, against which their sin is rebellion, is vindicated and upheld ; and so, to them, being in Christ by faith, there is no condemnation ; and they say, " O Lord, I will praise Thee ; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away." ²

(2.) Christ has delivered His people from the power of spiritual death. Like other men, believers, as sinners, had in them the carnal mind which is enmity against God. They were dead in trespasses and sins. But having, by His own obedience unto death, purchased from divine law and justice their right of deliverance from that state, He effects it by His own Spirit put within them, as well as by all the manifestations of divine grace and truth placed before them. They thus awake from the fatal sleep of nature—are roused out of their spiritual torpor—are quickened from spiritual death : and they find their spiritual darkness scattered—their lusts mortified—the dominion of sin within them overthrown—and the power of the great adversary in and over them taken away. And it is impossible that they can again fall under the power of spiritual death as before ; for the faithfulness of God is pledged, and the virtue of the Redeemer's death is operat-

¹ Galat. iii.

² Isa. xii.

ing, and the power of the Spirit is put forth, to keep them from again falling under the reigning power of sin, yea, to increase their freedom from its presence and control, until they are received into that world which sin can never enter, because there death is swallowed up of life.

(3.) The death of their bodies is abolished to believers by Christ.

Not that they escape from dissolution. It is appointed unto all men once to die. Still to the redeemed, death is abolished, so far as it is an enemy, the king of terrors, the executioner of avenging justice, the forerunner of eternal woe. To the redeemed, death is turned into a messenger of peace, who comes to conduct their souls into the blessed presence of God; and to conduct their bodies to the temporary resting-place, from which they shall soon rise in holy fitness for reunion with their souls, and for the services and joys and honours of the everlasting kingdom. Our conversation is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, and fashion it like to His own glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.¹

(4.) Christ hath abolished the power of eternal death over His redeemed.

So far as their souls are concerned, when the hour of their departure comes, they wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are like precious metal, purged from all accompanying dross. There is nothing left in their nature on which hell and destruction can seize. They can have no part in that world, in which sin shall prevail and rage for ever. They have their sure and kindred abode in those regions where sin cannot enter; where purity reigns and triumphs through eternal ages.

¹ Phil. iii.

The corruption seated in their bodies is also rooted out, the dishonour that rested on their bodies is taken away. The weakness that enfeebled their bodies departs. From the vileness that polluted their bodies, they are perfectly purified. The tendency of their bodies to dissolution is gone. They are no longer capable of weariness or decay. The Lord has come and changed their vile body, and fashioned it like to His glorious body.

Thus their whole nature is absolutely and for ever freed from the dominion and effects, from the presence and being of sin and death. Death in every form, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, is swallowed up in victory. They are filled with and surrounded by the glory of Christ. And they dwell in the light of an everlasting day.

II. Consider "the life and immortality" which our Saviour Jesus Christ has brought to light through the Gospel.

I. The life which Christ has brought to light.

The life here spoken of is the life that has begun to animate those who awake from sleep, rise from the dead, and come to Christ for light—who incline their ear and come to Him, hear, obey His call, and yield themselves unto God as alive from the dead—who are become dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord—and of whom it can now be said, because He lives, they shall live also. The following things may be noted concerning this life.

(1.) The partakers of this life have been taught to seek and find it in the favour of God. Before experiencing it, they were, like others, cast out of His sight. But He has revealed Himself to them, as in Christ reconciling them to Himself, not imputing to them their trespasses. They have thus experienced acceptance in the beloved. And this

acceptance brings them into contact with all holy and blessed objects and realities—admitting them to actual fellowship with God—placing them among His children—encompassing them with all holy and heavenly privileges and blessings—filling them with peace and joy in believing—and causing them to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost. This acceptance of them by God, as righteous in His sight, through the righteousness of Christ put upon them, is an important part of the life which Christ has brought to light through His Gospel.

(2.) More particularly, this life of the redeemed is a life of personal holiness. It is the life of God in their souls—heaven begun within them—the seed of eternal life planted and taking root and springing up in their spiritual nature—the state of grace, of which the end is everlasting glory. This life is implanted in regeneration—begins to work in conversion to God—is developed in the sanctification of believers, in their growth in grace—and is perfected in their being glorified in soul, body, and spirit with Christ in heaven.

(3.) This life differs from all other kinds of life among men. It differs from their mere physical or animal life, which they have in common with the inferior creation. It differs from mere intellectual life, or the exercise of men's natural understandings only. It differs from mere natural domestic life, or the material existence and conduct of families. It differs from purely political and social life, or men's opinions, sentiments, and conduct, as secular members of civil society. No doubt a life of personal holiness, in the case of all who lead it, will blend itself with all these other kinds of life, and sanctify them all. But still all these other kinds of life may be exhibited in vigour, while spiritual life is unfelt. A man may be strong in mind as well as in body, and may make great attainments in human

learning; and he may abound in outward domestic comforts; and he may also exert a large amount of power over mankind; and all the while he may live and die spiritually dead to God and to eternity. The life brought to light by Christ through the gospel, is a higher and holier and infinitely more blessed life than any of these other kinds of life. This is seen by considering the following characteristics of it.

First. The fountain of this life is the distinguishing love of God to its subjects. They are "chosen by God in Christ from the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love."¹ *Second.* The channel of this life is the infinite merits of Christ. He is their life. They are quickened together with Him. Only on union to Him do they experience this life. He is the vine; they are the branches. They live by Christ living in them. Their life is hid with Christ in God. *Third.* The agent of this life in believers is the Holy Ghost putting forth His power in their souls. No man can quicken himself to this spiritual life, or by his own unaided efforts retain it if once possessed. It is in every case produced by the power of God upon the soul. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God only giveth the increase. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." *Fourth.* This life can be fostered only by a proper use of the means of grace. Believers meet for worship and instruction; and Christ is among them, revealing Himself to their minds in another manner than He doth unto the world. They read His Word; and His Spirit causes the entrance of it to give light and life to their minds. They sit under a preached Gospel; and it is made to them the savour of life unto life. They pour out their desires to

¹ Ephes. i.

the Lord in prayer; and He does in them, and for them, exceeding abundantly above what they can ask or think. In their believing use of the sacraments, they partake of Christ Himself, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. *Fifth.* This life is a God-ward life. Derived from the Father's love, through the mediation of the Son, and by the inworking of the Spirit, they who have it spend its energies in doing the will of God, in promoting His glory, and in seeking their happiness in His presence. They live godly in the world. Their life is the life of God.¹ *Sixth.* This life is a life greatly hidden in its nature. In respect of its seat and substance it is invisible, and cannot be discerned by the merely natural eye. Its open manifestations, so far as they are seen in high moral results, may impress the men of the world. But they cannot discern the true reality and beauty of its secret, or even of its open workings, or the presence of the Spirit as its source. This life of believers is a life hid with Christ in God. *Seventh.* This life is a progressive life. It continues to advance in believers. Their path is like the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Their love abounds more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. They approve things that are excellent. They are sincere and without offence. They are filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. *Eighth.* This life is unailing: it certainly continues in all who partake of it. It is uniformly persevered in, till perfected in heaven. The life of believers is indestructible. Because Christ lives, they being one with Him shall live also. They never perish. None can pluck them out of His hand. He keeps them from falling, till they are presented faultless before the presence of His glory.

¹ Ephes. iv.

2. The immortality which our Saviour Jesus Christ has brought to light through the Gospel.

It is here spoken of as a state of incorruption, or that which is beyond the reach of decay. The spiritual life of the redeemed, begun and carried on within them on earth, is perfected in heaven. Their souls are at death made perfect in holiness, and immediately pass into glory; absent from the body, they are present with the Lord; they become at once the spirits of the just made perfect. They depart to be with Christ. And the life which thus becomes perfect in their souls at death, takes possession of their bodies at the resurrection; for Christ then raises them changed and fashioned like to His own glorious body, and so fitted for the service of God for ever. This is the hope laid up for them in heaven, the better substance, the inheritance reserved for them there. The immortal life of the redeemed in heaven shall thus be in reality the consummation of the state to which they are raised by grace on earth. Their present state of grace is glory begun. Their eternal state in heaven is the perfection of their present spiritual life, of their present personal holiness. The righteousness to which they are here renewed, is first rendered unmingled and complete, and then stamped with immortality. And the objects which for ever surround them, the employments in which they are engaged, the divine influences by which they are filled and guided, and the heavenly spirit which they unceasingly cherish, all combine to keep them through eternity, not only removed to an unapproachable distance from the power of all temptation, but advancing onward and upward in the path of glory, honour, and immortality.

It may serve to show in some faint measure what is included in the immortal life which is the portion of the redeemed in eternity, if we look at their freedom in heaven

from all the imperfections that adhere to their highest spiritual life on earth.

First. In heaven, they are finally freed from all indwelling sin. Nothing defiled enters there. Purged from all impurity by Jesus' blood and grace, they are without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. No corruption, no enmity to God, no alienation from Him, no evil disposition toward each other, no ungovernable desire of self-indulgence, no blamable want of love to God, no sinful deficiency of any kind, can be detected in them even by the all-seeing eye of the Holy One. They abide His awful gaze, and rejoice in His presence.

Second. In heaven, the redeemed are freed from all sense of guilt, and from all fear of wrath. All their former sins are taken away; and no new sin troubles their conscience. They look to Jesus, not with crushing grief, as having pierced Him, but with joyful gratitude for having washed them from their sins in His blood, and made them kings and priests unto God and His Father. No object meets their eye, to remind them painfully of their unworthiness, or to betoken remaining displeasure in Jehovah. His beauty is upon them. His glory overspreads them. They walk with Him in white. The eternal God is their refuge and dwelling-place, and exceeding great and eternal reward, and they live in the felt embrace of the everlasting arms.

Third. In heaven the redeemed are free from their present perplexing and misleading ignorance and errors. They no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face; and they know, even as they are known. In the light of the Lord, they for ever see light clearly. As regards the character of the Most High, and His relations to the universe, they see Him as He is.

Fourth. In heaven the redeemed are finally freed from the power and presence of Satan. He is never permitted to

appear again among the sons of God. He is shut up and confined within the regions of woe; and the redeemed on high are safe from all further approaches on his part, and in that, as in other ways, enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Fifth. In heaven the redeemed are equally freed from the presence of wicked men. No idolater, no unbeliever, no worldling, no profligate, no tyrant, tempter, or liar, can enter heaven. God has gathered out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. The language of impiety, or of pride, or of wrath, or of impurity, is never heard there. There, all are righteous; all are holy; all are united in love to God, and to one another. In heaven, truth alone is honoured; love alone is felt; righteousness alone is practised. None are met with there but faithful servants of the Lord. Nothing is witnessed but the holy and happy fellowship of saints; and nothing is heard but the melody of joy and praise.

Sixth. In heaven the redeemed are freed from all the suffering caused to them by the state of the Church on earth. The Church above is without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; it is holy and without blemish; a glorious Church, adorned as a bride for her husband. The vineyard there is kept, and watered every moment, by the Lord Himself. The city of God contains not a single unregenerate sinner, but only such as have done on earth the commandments of God; and the nations of the saved walk in the light and glory with which it is filled by the presence of God and of the Lamb. When they meet on the Mount Zion above, as a multitude whom no man can number, redeemed unto God by Jesus' blood and by the Spirit's power, and join the innumerable company of angels, who since they were created have dwelt in the presence of God, and ministered before His throne, there shall be nothing to mar their comfort, but everything

to complete their joy. As worshippers, all are spiritual, holy, earnest, and devout. No irreverence and no unbelief mingle with their services to pollute them. No enemies of God are there among His servants and children. There are no sinners and no hypocrites in that Zion, to be detected and visited with terror. That house of God is composed of gold, and silver, and precious stones, rests on the living foundation, and is the dwelling of the great King, in which His glory is seen unveiled, adoring homage is offered to His majesty, and His lovingkindness is acknowledged with unceasing praise.

Seventh. The redeemed in heaven are freed from all the calamities which they witness or share in while on earth. Instead of inhabiting a world cursed by its Maker, they are in the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Instead of cottages of clay, they inhabit the house of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Instead of present nakedness, they are clothed in robes of white. Instead of present weakness, they are made pillars in the temple of God. Instead of scanty fare or pinching poverty, the Lamb feeds them and leads them to living fountains of waters; and they hunger no more, neither thirst any more. Instead of being marred and wasted by trouble, they know nothing of disease and pain, and enjoy immortal youth and health. Instead of being crushed by grief, sorrow and sighing have fled for ever, so that they forget their misery on earth, or remember it only as waters that have passed away. Instead of longer sowing in tears, they now for ever reap in joy. None of their present troubles follow them to that blessed world. In those tranquil regions there is nothing but sweet continued peace. In that healthful country, none are sick. In that favoured land, all are kings. In that holy temple, all are priests. In that state of glorious freedom, none are servants save to the great Lord of all. In

that abode of love, all are friends of God, and have constant access to the King of kings, No sight of misery is ever witnessed, no sound of woe is ever heard, throughout that happy world. The eye rests only on scenes of well-doing and well-being. The ear is ever filled with sounds of triumphant joy.

Eighth. In heaven the redeemed are freed from all the miseries of Christ's absence.—They get nearer even to His bodily presence. Where He is, there they are also. They are in that land of uprightness where they see the King in His beauty ; where they see Him in His glorified humanity, in the midst of the innumerable multitude of His redeemed, and of myriads of angels.—They get clearer spiritual visions of Christ. They see Him no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face. Instead of occasional glimpses of His glory, they continually behold its brightness.—In heaven the redeemed become perfectly like to Christ. They are filled out of His fulness with light and life, full of Christ, made to bear and to reflect His perfect image.—In heaven, they are brought into the closest perpetual intercourse with Christ. The remaining sinfulness which mars it now is done away. His glory does not keep them at a distance, or afraid in His presence. They are full of love and of confidence toward Him. They look to Him as their gracious Redeemer, their Almighty Friend, their elder Brother, their loving Husband, their benignant Parent. As the Lamb in the midst of the throne, He leads them to living fountains of water. They see Him full of love to them. They are full of love to Him. He unbosoms Himself to them. They unbosom themselves to Him. And so an intercourse begins, the intimacy of which nothing can ever occur to interrupt.—In heaven, the redeemed are freed from all their present sadnesses and sorrows, and filled with Christ's own joy. They enter into it and have it fulfilled in themselves ; so that they have fulness

of joy in His presence, and pleasures at His right hand for evermore.—In heaven, the humiliation and sufferings which they endured on earth, in the service of Christ, are done away, and they sit with Him on His throne, and share His glory, as He puts down all His enemies, and constrains the universe to worship at His feet. They ever live in the presence of the glory and honour to which He is exalted in the kingdom of the Father; and they unite with the heavenly host in ascribing salvation to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb.

Ninth. In heaven the redeemed are freed from all further hidings of God's face, from all further blindness and perplexity as to His ways. Their life is found in His continually manifested presence. God dwells in light that is inaccessible, and full of glory; a glory to which no man can approach and live; and the seraphim veil their faces and their feet in the presence of that glory. Yet He causes the redeemed to stand before His throne, and graciously converses with them. The display of His compassion puts to flight their apprehensions. The revelations of His will make them to delight in doing it. The tokens of His favour fill them with gladness in His presence. They can now look on God. They behold His face in righteousness, and are satisfied with His likeness. They talk with Him face to face, as a man talketh with His friend. The scales have fallen from their eyes. The veil which concealed the Godhead from their view is drawn aside; and they have clear and near visions of God. They now see the wisdom, righteousness, and grace, of His everlasting purposes—of the whole course of His providence in time—of His dealings with themselves individually—and of the glorious issues of His purposes and providences in eternity. All the darkness and perplexity that beset them on the earth, in attempting to trace His works and ways, disappear in the

light of heaven; and they are filled with ravishing views of His all-glorious nature and perfections. The everlasting counsels of the Godhead—their execution in the course of time—all the way by which they themselves have been led out of a state of nature, a state of sin and misery, through a state of grace, into a state of glory—the perfection of the world in which they are at length placed and fixed—the forms of loveliness and grandeur that present themselves everywhere around them—the splendour of their lofty abode—the beauty that adorns, and the life that animates every object—the absence from that better world of all evil—the presence in it of all good—the attractive appearance of the myriads of angels and of redeemed men with which it is filled—the glorious visions of Him that sitteth on the throne, and of the Lamb in the midst of it, are all objects of unceasing contemplation to the redeemed on high. And all things are so full of God, so full of His presence, wisdom, power, purity, and goodness, as to ravish them with transporting thoughts and visions of His nature, to draw out their whole soul in grateful and adoring love to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and to attract them nearer and nearer for evermore to the source and centre of all light, and love, and glory.

Tenth, and lastly. In heaven, the life thus imparted, nourished, perfected, and spent, is freed from all further liability to failure or injury, and shall never have an end. It is immortal life; life that contains within itself no principle of decay, no seeds of dissolution; life that is equally beyond all possible injury from outward causes; life, in fact, that is still hid with Christ in God; and, therefore, life which shall endure as eternity itself. Were it otherwise; were the redeemed to know, or to expect, that after the lapse of any number and length of ages, they were to be annihilated, or liable again to fall into sin and misery,

the prospect of annihilation or the fear of falling, would serve to blast all their joys, to poison all the sources of their blessedness, to cover heaven itself with sackcloth, and to fill it with a melancholy gloom. But the life of the redeemed in heaven is immortal; life that is incorruptible; life that never ends in death; life that can never be fallen from, or taken away. This is a view of their life in the world to come, which we cannot grasp. For who can express or conceive the nature of eternity? Who can comprehend or measure its duration? Only the high and holy One by whom it is inhabited. Incomprehensible, however, as eternity is, we ought to think of it, until we impressively feel how little we know of it. And remembering that its interminable ages are the duration of the blessedness of the righteous, and of the misery of the wicked, we ought to feel a power attracting us to God, and holiness, and heaven, far greater than the power of all created objects and earthly enjoyments to keep us riveted to earthliness and sin.

The duration of everything in this world, and of the earth itself, is a moment compared with eternity. You may call the present life of a believer but the first budding of a character that is to develop into unfading beauty and perpetual fruitfulness. Or you may call it the dimmest and earliest dawning of an unmingled everlasting day. Or you may call it the narrow entrance into that universe, in which he shall range for ever, without being able to measure its dimensions, or to comprehend the amazing works and wonders with which the Divine hand has stored it. Or you may try to apprehend what it is to live for ever, by saying, with a certain writer, "We shall live as many years as there are blossoms in the spring, and after that as many as there are leaves in the autumn, and after that as many as there are drops of water in the ocean, and next as many as the atoms that compose the world, and after that as many as

the atoms that compose unnumbered worlds." But after you have, with the help of figures and numbers like these, looked through the thousands and millions of years that are coming, and can imagine them already come, and rolled behind you into the past, you have still before you what has been termed "a vast, boundless, amazing eternity, which can be represented by no similitude, and imagined by no conception." Millions of years that come and pass away, are absolutely nothing to the eternity still before us. Our thoughts are overwhelmed and lost, alike in the immensity of the universe, and in the eternity of its duration. Yet the life of the redeemed is to fill this eternity. They are to live and act, to think and feel, to love and rejoice for ever. Having entered into the New Jerusalem, they go no more out.

Practical reflections.

1. Were we duly alive to these realities, all the time that we could save from necessary temporal occupations, would be spent in preparing for eternity. Our companions would be those whose conversation and example served to impress us with its solemn magnitude. How eagerly would we listen to the voice of God addressing us in His Word and providence! How earnestly would we engage in the service of the sanctuary! How accustomed to regard it as indeed the house of God, and the gate of heaven! How fervently would we pray for the light of God's reconciled countenance to shine upon our souls! How keenly would we seek with the eye of faith to pierce the mysteries of the grave! How eagerly would we strive to penetrate the veil that conceals from us the unseen world, and to wander in thought through the regions of glory, or through the place of despair! How would we listen in imagination to the songs of the heavenly hosts, and the wailings of the lost,

and hasten our escape from the ways of death, and quicken our steps in the way of life! How would we cease from regarding the shadows of this present life, and be absorbed by the realities of the life to come! In this state of mind, earthly joys would seem a deception, wealth a trifle, honour a breath of air, and the present life itself a vapour that appeareth for a little and then vanisheth away. We would regard the earth itself as hastening to dissolution. We would look on all, even the mightiest works of earth, as mere briars and thorns prepared for the fires of the last day. We would look at the very firmament above our heads, as waxing old like a garment, as about to be changed like a worn-out vesture, and as destined, under the melting heat of the final fires, to be shrivelled up like a paper scroll. We would reckon nothing real, substantial, or enduring, except the fullness of joy in the presence of God, and the pleasures at His right hand for evermore, the riches of the heavenly paradise, the honours of the eternal kingdom, the unfading inheritance in the land of uprightness, the uncreated and eternal glory of the heaven of heavens.

2. Such as live to secure this life and immortality, seek their salvation in Christ as the one thing needful. They daily look to Him to deliver them from death, to be Himself the life of their souls, and to bring them to His glory. They redeem each passing day as their accepted time and day of salvation. They walk in the narrow way that alone leadeth unto life. They live habitually as on the verge of eternity. They set their affections on things above; fight the good fight of faith; and bear their afflictions as light and momentary, because working out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

3. Too many men who hear the gospel, and profess to believe it, are daily living as if these revelations of the future were an idle tale. Their forethought spends itself

on their present life, not on the endless state beyond. Instead of their thoughts and longings going out continually to life and immortality, their souls cleave to the dust, to earth, and time. They seek their home in this wilderness of time, and turn their backs on the better, the heavenly country. They grasp the shadows of earth, and let go the vast realities of heaven. They persist in dreaming of happiness here, where all things are deceitful, unsatisfying, and short-lived, and shut out from their minds those scenes of perfect and endless blessedness, which so invitingly stretch out before them in the realms of light. The glories of that world of life and immortality do not affect them. They are so BLIND, so destitute of spiritual vision, and so grope in darkness at noonday, that the word of God, with all its revelations, is to them a sealed book; they are cut off from all communion with the spiritual world; the light of the Sun of righteousness shines around them, without their drinking in His beams; and only God can unseal their spiritual vision, make the scales to fall from their mental eyes, and impart to them the faculty of spiritual sight, so as to bring them under the power of the great objects of faith. Further, they are so fast ASLEEP, so unconscious of the spiritual realities about to burst upon them, that, if forced into their thoughts at all, they pass through their minds and pass away from them, like the confused and forgotten dreams of the night. They are so DEAD, so dead to God, and to heavenly and eternal things, that to preach to them of these realities is as useless as it would be to speak of worldly things to the tenants of the grave. Go to the tombs, and cry to those who are lying in them, and offer them the wealth, the pleasures, the honours for which they lived on earth. Would the offer make their eyes to glisten, or excite their worldly lusts, or fire their mouldering bones? No; they are now insensible to what

absorbed them while they lived on earth, to what absorbs the busy mortals left behind them for a little. But these busy mortals are just as insensible with reference to spiritual realities, as these mouldering dead are to the things of time. Multitudes of those who are going about above the surface of the earth, in all the activity of natural life, are no better than walking corpses as regards the spiritual and eternal world. The realities of eternity have no hold of them. Its terrors do not disturb them. Its glories do not attract them. Under all that is proclaimed to them, from the word of God, respecting heaven and hell, they continue motionless and dead. Some even have got the length of scorning the whole scripture testimony on this subject as if it were a fable. But this apathy or enmity will not stay the unceasing and resistless course of things toward its speedy termination in the perfected immortal life of the redeemed, as well as in the final ruin of all who despise or neglect the great salvation.

4. Such as have been hitherto indifferent or hostile to these teachings of Christ, ought now to awake from their sleep, to rise from the dead, and to come to Him for light. Worldly riches quickly take to them wings, and fly away. The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and leave the soul polluted and perishing in its own corruption. And a name upon the earth is a name written in the sand. For such fleeting shadows, let them not still forfeit the better, the enduring substance. They must choose between this world and the next. They cannot serve God and mammon. The best can be made of both worlds only by subordinating the interests of time to those of eternity.

5. Nor is it otherwise than a fatal thing, to mistake the change required to fit us for immortal life. So to receive Christ and to rest upon Him for salvation, as to have His Spirit, and to live by Christ living in us, is indispensable.

Such as realise in their own experience death abolished, and life and immortality brought to light by Christ, are delivered from the wrath to come, have forgiveness of all their sins, are reconciled to God, stand accepted in His presence, find the life of their souls in His favour, are in Christ by faith, live in His Spirit and walk in His Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of His Spirit, have in them the mind of Christ, are conformed to His image and example, and walk in His steps. Thus only do they become meet for His immediate presence, for the sight of His glory, for the enjoyment of His fellowship, for entering into His joy. Thus only can any be attracted to heaven, and be able on good grounds to say, To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Such as have not undergone this change, have not the Spirit of Christ, and are none of His.

XI.

BEARINGS OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

“And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias ; who appeared in glory, and spake of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.”—LUKE ix. 30, 31.

“For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”—1 COR. ii. 2.

WHEN Jesus took with Him His three disciples, Peter, James, and John, to the mount of transfiguration, to meet and converse with Moses and Elias from heaven, the glory in which He revealed Himself, and His approaching death as the subject on which they talked with Him, are the two great things in that memorable passage of His history.

On that occasion Moses and Elias came from heaven as representing the redeemed in glory, who had formed the church on earth from the beginning of the world, to the close of the dispensation that was then coming to an end. Peter, James, and John were there as the representative apostles of the gospel dispensation that was now being introduced on earth, and that would embrace all coming generations of believers till the end of time.

On that occasion Christ was there as the Head of the Patriarchal and Jewish church, who had filled it with its predictive and figurative testimonies concerning Himself, and had now actually come to fulfil, or make way for the fulfilment of these testimonies. He was there, therefore, as the Head of all the redeemed then in heaven, who one and all owed their salvation to the atoning efficacy of His blood, as the Lamb virtually slain from the foundation of the world. He was there as the Head of all that were yet to

be redeemed by His blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, onward to the end of the world. He was there as the Head of all principality and power, and might and dominion, throughout the universe. He was there as the Creator and Governor of the universe, in the midst of which He was raising up a church of sinners purchased by His blood, and turned into saints and servants and sons of God by His grace, to be for ever His special glory in the eyes of all created intelligences, and in the midst of all His other works; and as capable of bearing all these relations, and performing all these works. He was there as the Son of God, the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, as the coequal, coeternal Son of God.

Such a meeting as Jesus then held with these representatives of the church in heaven and the church on earth, had in view no mere earthly or temporal object. It was not held to discuss such subjects as the laws of nature, or the facts of science, or the policy of worldly kingdoms, or any of the merely outward and temporal interests of mankind. The subject of this extraordinary conference, we may feel assured, was what far more deeply concerned the perfections and government of the Most High—the person and work of Jesus Himself—the results of His earthly ministry to mankind—and its ultimate effects on the condition of the universe at large. Yet the subject on which Moses and Elias came to hold communication with Him is expressly declared to have been His approaching death. They “spake” with Him “of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” His decease as God incarnate therefore must be viewed as the great central vital event in the evolutions of the divine purposes and providence, the event which was eternally designed, and is fitted, and is actually operating, beyond all the other works of God, to manifest His glory throughout the universe.

The same thing is indicated by the language of Paul to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

If the Apostle preached only this doctrine, and made it the main subject of his daily and hourly thoughts and conversation, and the great ruling power that governed his conduct, it was not because he was ignorant of other things, or incapable of realising their worth and importance. For he was a man of great intellectual powers, of extensive learning, of broad and deep sympathies. Few in any age have been fitter to excel in the highest pursuits that call forth the ambition and energies of the sons of men. It was therefore on the highest grounds both of reason and of faith, that he determined, in his relations to those to whom he ministered in the Gospel, to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

The Apostle, however, in making this assertion, does not mean that he made this doctrine the only subject of his meditations and his ministry, apart from its origin in the divine character and government, and its results in the character and destiny of the redeemed, and of the universe at large, and in the glory which thus accrues to the Eternal. He does not mean to say that he separated the subject of the cross of Christ from all other subjects connected with it, and dwelt on it as a man might try to play on one only of many strings of a musical instrument. It is manifest from the Apostle's writings that he discoursed habitually on all the great doctrines that concern the character and perfections, the law and government of God, the original and present condition of mankind, the gospel way of redemption from sin and misery, the manifold inexpressible blessings that flow from faith in Christ, the duties incumbent on men in their various relations and conditions, and the ordinances and laws of God given to be observed as means of grace and

as rules of holy living. These subjects were set forth by Paul with great clearness, fulness, and power. If then it was at the same time true, as it undoubtedly was, that still in his meditations, conversation, teachings, and writings, he knew nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, this doctrine, in its proper nature and bearings, must be bound up with all these others; to deal properly with it, is necessarily to deal with them; and to deal properly with them, is to be continually dealing with it. On the doctrine of Christ and Him crucified all other truths are in fact built up. By it as the keystone all the other parts of the arch of knowledge are united, and made and kept inviolably secure. This doctrine is the life-blood that flows through the whole system of scripture truths and scripture duties. And it was because the Apostle looked at and presented all truth and duty through the medium of the cross, or in inseparable connection with it, that he could truly say, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

In making this doctrine the grand central subject of all His teaching, Paul was not singular among the inspired prophets and apostles. Nor was this view of all truth and duty, as bound up in, and flowing from, the cross of Christ, confined to any age, or foreign to any age, of the church of God. From the fall of our first parents onward through all time, the eyes of sinful men have been directed, in one way or another, to Jesus Christ and Him crucified, as the source of all their light and life, their strength and hope, their present and eternal well-being. Scarcely had our first parents found themselves, through their disobedience, become guilty, depraved, and miserable, when Christ was set before them as the seed of the woman, who, by His suffering, represented as the bruising of His heel by the serpent, would bruise the serpent's head, or, in other words, would,

as the Son of God, be manifested to destroy the works of the devil. From that moment, the prospect of the sacrifice for sin, of the death to be undergone by the divine Surety, was held forth in every possible way before the minds of men, as the great source of life and peace to their souls, the means of their reconciliation to God, their fellowship with Him, their transformation into His likeness, and their final meetness for His presence. Righteous Abel offers a bloody sacrifice, and is accepted. Unbelieving Cain contents himself with offering the first-fruits of the earth, and is rejected. Noah steps forth on the recovered earth, and consecrates himself and family to God by offering burnt-offerings of every clean beast and fowl. In every place of his sojourning Abraham rears an altar, and offers sacrifice, and enters into covenant, and keeps up his fellowship with God. After the feasting of his sons and daughters, and as indeed his continual practice, Job rises early in the morning, and offers burnt-offerings according to the number of them all. By the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled on their doorposts, the Hebrews are delivered from their bondage, and rise into a nation of freemen consecrated to the service of Jehovah. Under the law given to the Jewish church, all things and persons connected with the service of God were purged with the sacrificial blood sprinkled on them.¹ The Spirit that was in the prophets was the Spirit of Christ, and the subject with which He filled their minds was the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.² Of these sufferings of Christ, the sacrifices of the law of Moses were but types and shadows.³ And so when Jesus came into the world, He came by the will of God, that He might offer Himself as the one sacrifice for sins for ever.⁴ In accordance with this, as the great design and end of His coming,

¹ Heb. ix. 22.² 1 Pet. i.³ Heb. x.⁴ Ps. xl. ; Heb. x.

when Moses and Elias came from heaven to talk with Him, they spake of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Accordingly, so soon as His disciples were at all able to apprehend the truth, from that time forth He began to show to them that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.¹ When the consummation of His sufferings took place in His death upon the cross, all nature was made to declare the solemnity of the event; for the heavens were covered with blackness, and the rocks were rent, and the earth was shaken with earthquakes. The formal character of God's dealings with the church was altered; for the entire system of Jewish ordinances was at once abolished, and a new dispensation was substituted of greater light and higher privileges for all nations alike. And henceforth the great central sun of the moral firmament was the once crucified, but now risen, glorified, and reigning Saviour, in and through whom God reveals His mingled majesty, holiness, and grace—brings sinners of mankind near to Him for present peace and holiness, and for eternal life—is filling heaven with ransomed myriads—and is binding angels in firmer, loftier, more adoring, and more joyful homage to His everlasting throne.

To affirm, in the face of these facts concerning the death of Christ, that it was a mere, though magnanimous, example of self-sacrifice, having for its main end to exercise a moral influence on men, in leading them to deny themselves, and to live lives of love for the good of others, is to empty the death of Christ of its meaning, its chief value, and its power. As transgressors of the divine law, and therefore condemned by it, we cannot know God so as to be drawn to Him, and

¹ Matt. xii.

to live before Him, except as we know Him in Christ as our Redeemer. We cannot know Christ as our Redeemer, except we look to Him, receive Him, and rest and live upon Him for our salvation, as having died for our offences, and risen for our justification. Our very faith in His divinity becomes fatally affected, when we view Him as having come into the world for any lower purpose than that of truly redeeming us by His precious blood. Our faith in the divine wisdom, righteousness, and love is fatally affected, if we regard Christ as having lived and died on earth for any purpose inferior to that of making a true and proper atonement for our offences to the justice, law, and government of God.

The whole work of Christ, however, becomes consistent, intelligible, and glorious, in its designs and effects, when viewed in the light of a true and proper work of redemption, wrought out for otherwise lost and perishing sinners. In Christ crucified as our atoning surety and substitute, we see the most diverse, majestic, awful, gracious, and lovely attributes of God harmonising in our salvation. Take in their natural meaning the declarations, "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. . . The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . For the transgression of my people was He stricken. . . It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. . . Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin. . . He shall bear their iniquities. . . He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."¹ Take these declarations in their natural meaning, as declarations that He bore the wrath of God due to His people for their sins, paid their debts, made satisfaction for their

¹ Isa. liii.

offences to divine justice, and a sufficient reason is given, as thus only can a sufficient reason be found, for the humiliation and consequent exaltation of the Son of God in our nature. For, taking this view of the death of Christ, we see a work of redemption accomplished, which forms a broad, immovable foundation on which every sinner can safely rest for salvation, and which shall issue in the recovery to God and the eternal salvation of a multitude that no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and which is destined to influence and mould, with incalculable power, the whole moral history of Jehovah's boundless and eternal kingdom.

The only other preliminary remark to be made is that the death of Christ and the cross of Christ are terms which comprehend not merely the concluding scene of His earthly ministry: they are to be viewed as embracing all the endurances of His history as a man of sorrows, all that He suffered in making Himself of no reputation, and in taking on Him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of man, and thus humbling Himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That marvellous humiliation of the Son of God in our nature, that life of suffering, and that death of unexampled shame and inexpressible agonies, viewed as the one offering of Himself, by which He has for ever perfected them that are sanctified, has a significance, and is destined to wield a power in the universe, infinitely beyond any and all other events that occur among the works of God.

To show this, let us shortly consider the important bearings of the death of Christ, or the connection which it has with all the great realities and interests of the universe.

I. THE CHIEF DISPLAY WHICH GOD IS GIVING OF HIS

CHARACTER AND GOVERNMENT IS THROUGH THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

I. *It is in connection with the plan of redemption, of which the death of Christ is the great central fact, that the perfections of God are more gloriously displayed than in all His other works.* Thus, His sovereignty is seen in passing by the angels that kept not their first estate, in providing no sacrifice for their sin; and again, in passing by so many of the wise, and mighty, and noble of this world, and such multitudes of meaner men, leaving all such without an interest in Jesus' death; and in rendering that death the means of salvation to a limited number of higher rank, and to a larger number of the foolish, and the feeble, and the base, on whom He has eternally fixed as the objects of His redeeming love.¹ His wisdom is seen in the effectual manner in which, through the death of Christ, He so punishes the sins of His people, and so pardons and saves themselves, as to render their salvation the means of glorifying all the perfections of His nature, and of upholding the efficacy of His moral government throughout the universe.² His holiness is seen in the wrath that burned so hot against the Son of His love, when he stood before Him as made sin for us though He knew no sin, and in the refusal of all access for us sinners into His holy presence, except as we approach to Him under the Redeemer's justifying merits and the sanctifying power of His blood. The justice of God is seen in the awful execution upon Christ as the substitute of sinners of that vengeance which would otherwise have overtaken the redeemed for ever.³ His love is most wonderfully seen in sparing not His own Son, but giving Him up to the death for us all. His truth is seen in fulfilling His threatenings against sin upon the Redeemer,

¹ Eph. i. 11; 2 Tim. i. 9.

² Eph. i. 8, iii. 10; Col. ii. 3.

³ Zech. xiii. 7.

and His promises of salvation to the redeemed.¹ And finally, His power is seen, first, in controlling the whole movements of the material creation, and of the inhabitants of heaven, earth, and hell, so as, after four thousand years of preparation for it, to bring about the offering of the great sacrifice upon the cross; and then, in turning that event into the simple yet mighty instrument by which He replenishes the universe with ransomed and regenerated men, confirms the elect angels in their steadfastness, renders the ruin of lost men and fallen angels conspicuously just, wise, and necessary, and fills His boundless and eternal kingdom with alleluias which otherwise would never have been offered to His name.²

2. *It is in connection with the death of Jesus that the existence of God in three persons is most clearly revealed to us in Scripture.*

The Father is revealed as fixing His distinguishing and everlasting love on guilty men; as devising the wonderful plan of mercy by which they are saved; as entering into a covenant with His own Son to purchase them by His blood and redeem them by His power; as preparing all things on earth for the sacrifice which Jesus at length offered of Himself to satisfy the divine justice; and then as declaring the acceptance of His sacrifice by raising Him from the dead, and by committing all judgment into His hands.

The Son then places Himself before us as accepting the office assigned to Him; as coming into the world with delight to execute it; as loving the Church and giving Himself for it; as taking our nature in the form of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and as now, in consequence, reigning over heaven, earth, and hell, that He may redeem His people and put His enemies under His feet.

¹ Ps. lxxxv. 10.

² Isa. xlix. 26; Matt. xxviii. 19; Eph. i. 19.

Last of all, the Holy Spirit comes into view, as inspiring prophets to predict the Messiah's suffering and death; as creating and animating various types and symbols of Christ as the destined Sacrifice; as leading ancient believers to look and long for His coming, and for the redemption which He would accomplish; as preparing for Him the human body and reasonable soul which He assumed; as anointing Him for His work and strengthening Him to finish it; as coming down in His miraculous gifts and saving influences on the primitive Church; as applying redemption in successive ages to the souls of men; and as still to be poured out in larger measures than ever on coming generations, to convert the world to Christ, and to turn its great moral wildernesses into one vast and fruitful garden of the Lord.

3. *The death of Christ is the only event that forms a key to open up the providence of God towards this world.*

The dealings of God with this world are an inexplicable mystery to all who do not look at them through the medium of Christ's death; while that death, rightly viewed, casts a flood of light on the whole providence of God.

The Fall itself was permitted with a view to the atoning work of Jesus. The first promise to our fallen parents, conveyed in the sentence pronounced upon the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," was a promise that by His death Christ would abolish death and destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. All after intimations and promises of mercy had reference to that shedding of blood, without which there is no remission; so that, in respect of the virtue of His death, Christ was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The whole system of animal sacrifices, the blood of which continued to flow for

four thousand years, shadowed forth, by divine appointment, the death of Jesus. The nation of Israel was called into existence, and preserved through its eventful history, and all the other kingdoms of the world were disposed of, to prepare for the incarnation and obedience unto death of the Son of God. During His personal abode on earth, the heavenly host had it for their chief employment to minister to the Man of sorrows, till He finished His work of suffering. His death was the great event that defeated the designs of the powers of darkness. It changed the whole face of things on earth. As the inevitable result of it, the economy of Moses, with its outward rites, its bodily washings, its blood of bulls and goats, its typical priesthood, its earthly temple, its exclusive and limited privileges, and its whole array of temporary and local types and figures, passed away. The Gentiles, hitherto shut out, in a great measure, from the Church of God, were now admitted to it on equal terms with the Jews. The Holy Spirit everywhere accompanied with His saving power the preaching of the cross. Congregations, consisting of such as had been brought to peace with God, and to purity of heart and life, through faith in a crucified Redeemer, were speedily found in almost all quarters of the habitable world. Ever since, the cross of Christ has been exercising a humanising influence over all the nations that even in name have acknowledged its sway. The transforming power and blissful workings of the cross of Christ shall yet fill the earth. And when all the destined triumphs of the death of Jesus on the earth are won, the designs of the divine providence towards the world shall be accomplished, the earth and its works shall be burned up, and time itself shall be swallowed up in eternity.

Thus, as regards the perfections of God, His sovereignty, wisdom, holiness, justice, love, truth, and power; as regards

His existence in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and as regards His providential dealings with this world throughout the whole course of time; it is in the death of Christ, and the redemption with which that death is fraught, that we have the chief display of the character and government of the Most High.

II. THE DEATH OF CHRIST IS THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL AND ESSENTIAL OF ALL THE PARTS OF HIS MEDIATORIAL WORK.

His whole work as Mediator between God and man centres in His death; in the sacrifice which He offered of Himself for sin. For—

1. He could have had no right, as He could not possibly have had any desire, to interpose on behalf of self-destroyed, sin-ruined men; and God could not have constituted and accepted Him as the daysman between Himself and them, except on the ground of His satisfying divine justice for their sins, and rendering on their behalf to the law of God, under which they were, that perfect obedience which is laid down, in the law itself, as the one express and unalterable ground on which they can experience and enjoy His favour.

2. He could have no saving light to communicate to their sin-darkened minds regarding the perfection, will, and providential government of God, except the light which issues from the cross. From that source flows, as we have seen, all the needed soul-satisfying, soul-refreshing knowledge that we can receive respecting the character of Him with whom we have to do, respecting the relations in which He stands to us, as the Father who gave up His Son to die for us—as the Son who gave up Himself—and as the Holy Spirit who, having sustained our Substitute and Surety in working out our redemption, now has it as His proper work to apply that redemption to our souls. It is only in and

through His sacrifice and death that God, while remaining yea while manifesting Himself more and more impressively to be holy, just, and true, also and at the same time reveals Himself as merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and imparting all the blessings of grace and glory to all who draw nigh to Him by the new and living way. It was as the destined sacrifice that, from the fall of man, through the medium of the types that shadowed forth that sacrifice, Christ brought the penitent and believing of all these ages into a state of reconciliation and of fellowship with God. In the fulfilment of His personal ministry on earth, the whole of His words and actions tended to reveal the divine character, as alike righteous and merciful; to display the perfect purity which the divine law requires; to make known the need of forgiveness and of spiritual cleansing on the part of all who would know, love, and serve God now, and be fit for His presence in heaven; and to prepare the minds of His disciples for His atoning death, and consequent resurrection and ascension to the right hand of power, by which He has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. And still, as ever, His work as Mediator is carried on upon the footing of His having, as God the Saviour, purchased the Church of God with His own blood.¹ His presence in heaven as the Lamb that was slain is a continual intercession there, by which He proves able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. The almighty power given to Him to wield in heaven and on earth is put into His hands as the Lamb that was slain, now the Lamb in the midst of the throne. And in that character, even in the character of a priest upon His throne, He is employing the daily operations of His providence, and the revelations of His true and faithful

¹ Acts xx.

word, and the ordinances of His grace, and the influences of His Spirit, to enlighten the spiritually darkened minds of sinful men; to quicken their spiritually dead hearts; to subdue their pride and lust; to sanctify their thoughts, and affections, and habits; and to carry forward this work of transformation, until they are perfectly changed into His own likeness, and taken to live and serve for ever in His immediate presence. The whole of this work of Christ as Mediator has its source and centre in His atoning sacrifice. And so all through their history on earth, the burden of all the habitual praises of the redeemed is, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."¹ And not less truly the burden of the songs of the redeemed in heaven will eternally be, "Thou art worthy, . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood."²

III. THE DEATH OF CHRIST IS THE ONLY CHANNEL OF TRUE BLESSEDNESS TO SINFUL MEN, AND THE GREAT PREVAILING MOTIVE BY WHICH THEY ARE TURNED AND HELD TO THEIR DUTY.

I. *It is the only channel of true blessedness to sinful men.*

(I.) From the death of Jesus flow all those blessings that are spiritual and saving in their nature.

Are such as truly believe in Christ pardoned and accepted by God? They are "justified by the blood of Christ."³ Are they taken into the family of God? They are so only because He sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons.⁴ Are they

¹ Rev. i.

² Rev. v.

³ Rom. v.

⁴ Gal. iv.

sanctified? They are so only because Christ died to redeem them from iniquity, and to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.¹ Are they made fruitful in holiness? They are so because they are crucified with Christ, and live by Christ living in them.² Have they confidence in the love of God? They have it because He spared not His own Son, but gave Him up to the death for us all, and therefore will now, with Him, freely give us all things.³ Have they true peace of conscience? They have this peace with God through the blood of the cross.⁴ Are they advancing in the divine life? It is because the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the everlasting covenant, is making them perfect in everything to do His will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in His sight.⁵ Are they made to persevere unto the end? It is because by one offering Christ hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified,⁶ and because nothing now can separate them from His love.⁷ Do they experience the divine pity? It is because they have an High Priest who is touched with a feeling of their infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as they are, yet without sin,⁸ and thus hath learned obedience by the things which He Himself suffered.⁹ Are they strengthened to live a heavenly life? It is by bearing about in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus is manifest in their body.¹⁰ Are they animated with heavenly hope? It is because they are made partakers of Christ's sufferings, and so are supported by the expectation that when His glory is revealed they shall be glad with exceeding joy.¹¹

(2.) While every spiritual and saving blessing of which

¹ Tit. ii.⁴ Col. i.⁷ Rom. viii.¹⁰ 2 Cor. iv.² Gal. ii.⁵ Heb. xiii.⁸ Heb. iv. 1¹¹ 1 Pet. iv.³ Rom. viii.⁶ Heb. x.⁹ Heb. v.

believers partake on earth flows from the death of Christ alone, the very outward ordinances of grace on which they wait, and in which they take such pleasure, derive all their efficacy and value from being the means by which believers are brought into contact with the blood of Christ.

Thus the Scriptures make them wise unto salvation only as they overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of His testimony.¹ Prayer is efficacious only as they enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus.² Baptism is an effectual means of salvation only to such as, being baptized, are buried with Christ into His death, so that as He was raised up by the glory of the Father, they also walk in newness of life.³ And the Lord's Supper is a means of saving good to such as partake of it only in so far as the bread which they eat leads them to the communion of the body of Christ, and the cup which they drink leads them to the communion of the blood of Christ.⁴

2. As all true good bestowed upon men in this world thus flows from the death of Christ, so not less truly *all power of doing good springs from the same source.*

The death of Christ operates as the great instrumental cause of believers returning to their duty. It is the only source of true virtue on earth. The death of Christ furnishes the only effectual motives to every duty, and secures the strength required for its performance.

Thus they learn to deny themselves, by taking up their cross and following Christ.⁵ They renounce the world when they can say, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I am crucified to the world.⁶ They are brought to repent when they look on Him whom they have pierced and mourn.⁷ They die to sin and live to

¹ Rev. xii.³ Rom. vi.⁵ Matt. xvi.⁷ Zech. xii.² Heb. x.⁴ 1 Cor. x.⁶ Gal. vi.

righteousness¹ when the love of Christ constraineth them, because they thus judge, that if one died for all, then all were dead, and that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again.² Their old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin.³ Dead with Christ, they also live with Him. They live to the praise and honour of God, because they are bought with a price, even that of Christ's precious blood, and therefore glorify God with their soul, body, and spirit, which are His.⁴ They confess Christ before men, as remembering how, in order "that He might sanctify the people with His own blood," Jesus suffered without the gate, and so feeling constrained to "go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."⁵ They run with patience the race set before them by looking to Jesus, who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.⁶ They learn to love each other by walking in love, as Christ also loved them, and gave Himself for them, an offering and a sacrifice to God.⁷ They become tender-hearted and forgiving, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them.⁸ They become humble by having "the mind in them that was in Christ . . . who . . . humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."⁹ They learn to be liberal by knowing the grace of the Lord Jesus, that though He was rich, for their sakes He became poor, that they, through His poverty, might be rich.¹⁰ They learn to make sacrifices for each other's good when they perceive the love of God in laying down His life for them.¹¹ In the different relations of life they learn their

¹ 1 Pet. ii.⁴ 1 Cor. vi.⁷ Eph. v.¹⁰ 2 Cor. viii.² 2 Cor. v.⁵ Heb. xiii.⁸ Eph. iv.¹¹ 1 John iii.³ Rom. vi.⁶ Heb. xii.⁹ Phil. ii.

duties at the cross of Christ. Husbands love their wives, as Christ loved the Church. Wives become subject to their husbands, as the Church is to Christ.¹ Servants are to be subject to their masters, even to the froward, because Christ also suffered for them, leaving them an example that they should follow His steps.² In short, Christians are to live a joyous, thankful, holy life, under the constraining and animating power of Christ's death. They are to joy in God through their Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have received the reconciliation.³ They are to be ever praising Christ, as having loved them and washed them from their sins in His blood.⁴ They are to be walking in the light,⁵ as those that are cleansed by the blood of Christ from all their sin.⁶ And they are to be showing His death till He come.⁷

IV. THE DEATH OF CHRIST EXERCISES THE MOST DECISIVE INFLUENCE OVER THE EVERLASTING CONDITION OF THE REDEEMED, AND OF THE ANGELIC HOSTS OF HEAVEN, AND EVEN OF THE LOST INHABITANTS OF HELL.

I. *As to the inhabitants of heaven.*

(1.) To the redeemed there, the death of Christ is for ever the chief source of their happiness, and the chief theme of their praises.

There they for ever behold Christ in the midst of the throne as a Lamb that has been slain. There they "fall down before the Lamb," and "sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy, . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."⁸ There they are seen as those who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and

¹ Eph. v.

³ Rom. v.

⁵ 1 John i.

⁷ 1 Cor. xi.

² 1 Pet. ii.

⁴ Rev. i.

⁶ 1 John i.

⁸ Rev. v.

made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth upon the throne dwelleth among them. And they hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither does the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne feedeth them, and leadeth them to living fountains of waters; and God wipes all tears from their eyes.¹ The Lord Jesus is thus present with His people for ever as He that bought them with His blood, and they dwell in His presence for ever as the ransomed of the Lord.

(2.) The angels themselves are for ever deeply interested in, and powerfully affected by, the death of Jesus.

As was intimated by the position of the cherubim in the temple, gazing downward on the mercy-seat, and as intimated also by the language of Peter, "which things the angels desire to look into,"² these heavenly intelligences have ever been labouring more and more to penetrate the mysteries of the Saviour's death.

They were actively employed in connection with the incarnation of the Son of God and with His personal ministry on earth. They announced with gladness His birth when He became God manifested in the flesh. They adored His Godhead even while it was veiled under the form of weak and suffering humanity. They waited on the footsteps of the Man of sorrows along the path of humiliation which He trod. They ministered to His human nature when sinking amid His agonies, and they surrounded Him with their hosannahs when He ascended to His glory.

Further still, they derive their chief motives for loving and serving God from the death of Jesus. God's manifold wisdom is made known to them chiefly by what they see of

¹ Rev. vii.

² 1 Pet. i.

it in the redemption of the Church by the blood of Jesus.¹ They stand before the throne adoring the thrice-holy One for thus filling the earth with His glory. They have gladly taken their place under Christ as forming with the redeemed that one family of which He is the Head. They find their knowledge of God and their steadfastness in His love and service, to be greatly owing to what they have seen of God in the cross of Christ. They are thus as greatly indebted for their happiness to His death as those who have been redeemed by His blood. Nor is there ever to come a period in the history of these glorious beings, when they shall be able to say that they have penetrated and exhausted the wonders of redeeming love, or become weary of meditating on the death of Jesus. On the contrary, because of the benefit which they have derived, and continue to derive, from that marvellous event, they shall be heard eternally, in countless numbers, round about the throne, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

(3.) Nay, the death of Christ is to be followed by still more extensively blissful results throughout the universe. For the whole of the happy creation is to have its destiny moulded and determined by this event. This fact is plainly to be gathered from the employment in which John tells us that, in vision, he saw it engaged. For every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and in the sea, and all that are in them, were heard by him saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

2. *Even the lost inhabitants of hell find the death of Christ exercising a decisive influence over their sad destiny.*

¹ Eph. iii.

(1.) The finally wicked from the earth are dealt with as enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction. The sorest punishment that comes on them is that which they endure as having trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted His blood a common thing. For having wilfully rejected the crucified Redeemer, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation which shall devour them as adversaries of God. The most crushing kind of vengeance that comes on lost men is the wrath of the Lamb.

(2.) And on the fate of devils nothing operates with such terrible power as their relation to the death of Christ. It brings out their *malice*; for they are making it their great object to counteract the holy and blessed design of Christ's death, and to prevent that redemption of men which it secures. It serves to manifest their *folly*; for the very death which, in their blind and self-destroying rage, they helped to effect, and which they have ever since striven to dishonour, has baffled their designs, spoiled them of their dominion, and made them to fall like lightning from heaven. And the death of Christ completes their *wretchedness*; for they remember how, even when He appeared and dwelt on earth in the weakness of our nature, He afforded no vulnerable point for their attack. They see how, in virtue of the very death which they so eagerly assisted in compassing, the Lord Jesus now delivers from their power every one of those whom He purchased with His blood. And they find that it is the hand of the crucified One which is to inflict on them the punishment of their crimes, and to prove their everlasting torment.

And thus over that dark and dreadful region which finally receives wicked men and fallen spirits, the death of Christ exercises a terrible power, deepening its gloom, kindling its fires, piercing its inhabitants with peculiar agonies, and in

this manner aggravating the horrors of hell as emphatically as it heightens the happiness of heaven.

Practical Reflections.

1. It is impossible to overrate the importance of a true and growing knowledge, a constant remembrance, and a due improvement of the death of Christ.

We have no true and saving knowledge of God, till we know Him as revealed in the cross of Christ.

We have no right to a single blessing, except as the fruit of His death. Our very life is forfeited by sin; and if spared, we are so for the sake of Christ's death, to give us time to repent, or to leave us without excuse.

Nothing in the long run is a privilege which the death of Christ has not purchased, and refuses to convey. That death has not purchased a liberty to sin, a right to indulge the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. And, therefore, to indulge in the pleasures of sin is not to use a privilege. It is to embrace the curse, and to pluck destruction down on our own heads.

Anything that is truly good for us, can reach us only as the fruit of Christ's death, through the channel of His blood. Not only spiritual blessings, but even temporal mercies, can come to us as such, only through this channel.

Sacrificial blood was connected with every blessing to the ancient people. Sprinkled on their door-posts, it saved them from the sword of the destroying angel. Sprinkled on the priests, it consecrated them to their sacred office. Sprinkled before the veil, it showed that by the blood of the true sacrifice the way would at length be opened up into the holiest of all. Sprinkled on the mercy-seat, it secured the divine favour to Israel. Sprinkled on the leper, it cleansed him from his pollutions. Sprinkled on the book of the law, it taught that the blood of the great atonement

alone could remove the wrath due for our transgressions, and render the law a law of love to the redeemed. Sprinkled on the people, it intimated that they could be treated as the flock of God the Saviour only as purchased by His blood. Sprinkled on the sanctuary and its furniture, it showed that the persons and services of saints are acceptable to God only when sprinkled with the blood of Jesus.

Not less truly is the blood of Jesus Christ intimately and indissolubly bound up with everything that is precious to us under the Gospel dispensation. The shedding of His blood on this guilty earth has hitherto saved it from destruction, and secures to its sinful inhabitants opportunities and offers of salvation. With His blood Christ has entered heaven, and sprinkled its holy and everlasting mansions. In virtue of the shedding of His blood, Christ now appears in the presence of His Father, making continual intercession for His people. Yea, He is now to be seen for ever in the midst of the throne as a Lamb that had been slain.

With regard to ourselves individually, we cannot receive a single blessing, or perform acceptably a single duty, except in connection with the death of Jesus. We therefore ought to "determine to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified;" to glory in nothing but the cross of Christ, by which the world is crucified to us, and we are crucified to the world; and, as those that are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, to glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are God's.

2. The virtuous or vicious character of all professors of the Gospel, and their happy or miserable state and prospects, are to be determined by the place which the death of Christ holds in their sentiments and practice.

(1.) Some, many, see nothing valuable in the death of Christ. It therefore exerts no influence over their life. Their daily views and feelings are much the same as they

would have been, had they never heard at all of the death of Jesus.

The belief of His death, indeed, has a place among the articles of their creed, and the outward commemoration of it has a place in the catalogue of their observances. But it has less influence in moulding their character, and in governing their life, than the paltriest interests of earth and time.

The Saviour is in their eyes as a root out of a dry ground. They see no beauty in Him why they should desire Him. They see no glory in His cross. They neither experience, nor desire, nor look for any benefit from it.

In this state they live and die without an interest in the benefits which the death of Christ has purchased. They therefore perish under the guilt of that sin from which the blood of Christ has not cleansed them, under the dominion of that depravity which the cross of Christ has not served to subdue, and to destroy in their heart and life.

(2.) On the other hand, some, not a few, are made alive to the virtue of the Redeemer's death. They have peace with God, and are reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. Jesus has ransomed them from the pit of destruction, and has also redeemed them from all iniquity. His death is the source of their life. His weakness is the source of their strength. His sorrows are the source of their joys. Their privileges and honours flow from His agonies. They cleave to Him, magnify and love Him, as having washed them from their sins in His blood, and made them kings and priests unto God and His Father. They triumph by what seemed His overthrow. They overcome their enemies by His blood.

With that blood sprinkled on their persons and services by faith, their safety and happiness are secured. That blood beneath which they abide for shelter, has for them

satisfied the justice of God, quenched the fires of hell, obtained for them the right of deliverance from all their enemies, procured for them every spiritual blessing in time, and purchased for them the everlasting inheritance of heaven. And what the blood of the Lamb has purchased for them, His power will impart. From the midst of the throne He is putting forth His Almighty power to save all for whom He gave Himself a ransom.

The death which secures their safety and happiness for time, is the source of their blessedness for eternity. As they leave the world, they wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, and so are fitted to stand before the throne. His death has purchased the white robes that clothe them on high, and the palms of victory which there they hold in their hands. In His character of the Lamb of God, they follow Christ whithersoever He goeth. In the same character He leads them to living fountains of water. The waters that refresh and gladden them flow out from the throne of God and the Lamb. They are happy on high as the Lamb's wife. They feast at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The Lamb is the light of that temple, in which they eternally worship. The song which they sing for ever is the song of the Lamb. Their unceasing adorations are offered to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb.

XII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION ; A GLIMPSE OF THE GLORY FLOWING TO CHRIST FROM HIS DEATH.

“ And was ” (*i.e.*, Jesus was) “ transfigured before them.”—MATTHEW xvii. 2.

THE transfiguration represented the glory which would follow to Christ from His humiliation and obedience unto death. The Jewish scriptures foretold that glory. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.¹ The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.² Blessed be His glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory.³ The Jews, therefore, were expecting the Messiah to come in majesty and power. But alas! for themselves, it was in the character of an earthly potentate that they expected Him. And so when He came, they were utterly disappointed by His actual appearance, and with His avowed object and designs, and refused to acknowledge and submit to Him. They saw no beauty in Him why they should desire Him. They despised and rejected Him. They said we will not have this man to reign over us. Even the disciples of Jesus were for a time haunted by similar expectations, and could not conceal them. A few days before the transfiguration, He had begun to speak to them more plainly than before of His coming sufferings and death, upon which Peter found fault with Him for uttering or even entertaining such a prospect. Jesus therefore,

¹ Ps. ii.

² Ps. cx.

³ Ps. lxxii.

after turning on Peter with a holy severity, as savouring not the things that be of God, but those that be of men, clearly warned, and strongly impressed upon the disciples, that they must get quit of all the worldly ambition that filled them, and be ready themselves to encounter suffering and death in His service as the only way to the blessedness and honour awaiting His followers. And then to show that the results would be infinitely worthy of all the sacrifices required to reach them, He gave on the mount of transfiguration a display of the glory to which He and they were to hasten through the sufferings that intervened. It was a most instructive circumstance that when Moses and Elias appeared from heaven and talked with Jesus on the mount, the subject of their conversation was just that very subject of which the disciples could not bear to hear a word, the subject of His approaching sufferings, "They spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem;" and so proved it to be the most necessary and important event that could happen in the whole course of time, or be recorded in the annals of earth, and the only way of entrance for Himself and His people into the glory that should follow.

Our present subject is the glory which was to accrue to Jesus from the humiliation, suffering, and death, to which He yielded Himself in order to reach that glory. The transfiguration reminds us of the following things concerning His glory: its reality—its heavenly, its divine nature—the connection between His previous sufferings and the glory that followed—and the correspondence between them and it.

I. The transfiguration sets forth the reality and certainty of the Redeemer's glory.

Notwithstanding the divine wisdom and power displayed by Him in His teachings and works, and the direct testi-

mony borne by the Father to His dignity and mission, it is evident that His humble birth and circumstances and companionships, His want of worldly ambition, and His uniform opposition to it in those about Him, greatly tried the confidence and hope of His disciples in Him. And considering the far heavier trials that were before them in respect of their Master's sufferings and their own, the importance of the sight of His glory afforded on the mount of transfiguration cannot be overrated. The remembrance of it was fitted to keep alive or to rekindle in their minds, even in the darkest hour of their distress, the hope that His and their sufferings would still be followed by glory to Himself and to them. In like manner, to believers in every age, the transfiguration is a pledge that as truly as He then assumed a form of such surpassing brightness, so really and certainly is He now in possession of the glory that was then and in that manner symbolised.

II. The transfiguration exhibits not only the reality and certainty, but the heavenly, the divine nature of the Redeemer's glory.

The disciples as well as the Jews expected the Messiah to appear clothed with temporal power. Hence the desire and effort of those who, seeing the miraculous power put forth by Jesus, sought, for their own ends, to make Him a king. Hence the ambition of Zebedee's wife to get a promise from Jesus of a place for her two sons on His right hand and left, in His kingdom. Hence the anger at these two felt by the other disciples, because they were being thus forestalled. This perversion of the meaning of the prophecies respecting the Messiah's kingdom was met and refuted by the display which Christ's transfiguration gave not of an earthly, but of a heavenly glory. For He then presented no characteristics of earthly greatness. No armies

followed Him. No multitudes offered outward homage. No earthly throne was occupied by Him. No earthly palace received Him as its owner. He stood forth on the mount of transfiguration as isolated even then from all mere worldly pomp and power as He was in the season of His deepest humiliation. The glory in which He then appeared was altogether of an unearthly character. The splendour investing Him was no earthly magnificence, but a heavenly radiance that became Him as the brightness of the Father's glory. And the lustre of His countenance betokened that it was not the visage of mere earthly majesty, but the face of God. While the Father's voice declaring, "This is my beloved Son: hear Him," proclaimed Him no mere human teacher, deliverer, or earthly ruler, but a Teacher, Saviour, and Ruler who is divine, whose truth, and grace, and law are entitled to the trustful, loving homage of all mankind.

III. The transfiguration served to show the connection between the sufferings of Christ and His glory.

The disciples as well as the Jews were expecting glory to Jesus and to themselves without suffering. They supposed that suffering was inconsistent with glory, instead of being the only way to it. They seemed to be expecting that in an earthly sense He would, as the Most Mighty, gird His sword on His thigh and ride prosperously, and make His arrows sharp in the hearts of His enemies, and cause the people to fall under Him.¹ The shame and suffering and death awaiting Him first, and themselves afterwards, were utterly foreign to their anticipations. And so His transfiguration took place, in connection with His conversation with Moses and Elias from heaven with reference to the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. The

¹ Ps. xlv.

circumstances of that event thus connected His sufferings with His subsequent glory. He had set this connection before them in words. He had warned them of His coming sufferings and of their own. He had exhorted them to prepare for both. He had impressed upon them that His sufferings must precede His glory. He had at the same time assured them that His glory would certainly follow and flow from His sufferings. He had also assured them that as they could have no glory except He purchased it by His sufferings, and they prepared for it by their own; so, if He died for them, and they bore their cross after Him, their exaltation along with Him in His approaching kingdom would certainly and speedily take place. And having already impressed these things on them by words, He deepened the impression by action, inasmuch as He was heard speaking with the visitants from heaven about nothing but His death, in the very midst of the glory in which He revealed Himself. Moses and Elias expressed no surprise at His approaching death. They rather spoke of it as an event well understood and firmly expected in heaven, and destined to lead to the most glorious results. And so all that the disciples saw and heard on the mount of transfiguration clearly and impressively testified that the death of Jesus was indispensable to His exaltation—that His glory would flow from redeeming His people from sin and Satan, and death and hell, and from restoring them to the favour, image, service, and presence of God—that He could accomplish this work of the redemption of His people only by dying in their stead—that He could redeem them from the curse of the law only by bearing it—that He could satisfy divine justice only by becoming its victim—that by being made sin for them they would be made the righteousness of God in Him—that through His suffering they would go free—that through His death they would live for ever—that having

shed His blood, He would go with it into the holiest of all on high, and be their all-prevailing Advocate and Intercessor with the Father, and take possession of heaven in their behalf, and prepare it for them and them for it, and bring them in due time into the possession of it by His almighty power. These and similar lessons being taught by the events of the transfiguration, it served to expose the delusion that His glory would be that of an earthly monarch rising to the possession of an earthly kingdom, and to proclaim that His glory would follow and flow from His sufferings; that He would purge our sins and then sit down at the right hand of God; that He would humble Himself and become obedient unto death, and would therefore be highly exalted by God, and receive a name which is above every name.

IV. The transfiguration showed the correspondence between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that followed.

There is a suitableness in the glory of Christ to the ignominy and the endurance by which it was won. The features of His exaltation answer to the features of His previous humiliation. The shame of the abasement to which He yielded Himself, is compensated by the appropriateness of the honours to which He is in consequence raised.

That this suitableness would be found was indicated in the fact that it was the same humanity which Jesus took and wore, in all its meanness, pain, and sorrow, that was so suddenly and marvellously transformed. In order to His becoming so glorious, He did not require to take to Him a new body, one distinct from that in which He had lived and suffered on the earth, and was about to agonise and die. It was that very body which He had taken of the Virgin Mary, and which has been and continued to be subject to all sorts of suffering until it was broken on the cross, it was

that same suffering body that quickly assumed so glorious an appearance. And this fact intimated that the character of His humiliation would have its counterpart and corresponding reward in the character of His consequent exaltation.

What was thus intimated by the transfiguration has accordingly happened. The glory of Jesus in its various aspects, and in the successive developments of it, reminds us of the particulars of His debasement, and so forms its appropriate reward. We may see this by glancing at the glory which He now possesses—at the glory in which He shall be revealed at the last day—and at the glory in which He is to be revealed throughout eternity.

1. Look at the present glory of Christ. From the moment when He cried out on the cross, "it is finished," and bowed His head, and gave up the ghost, His wonderful triumphs over all His enemies, and His own exaltation to His present glory commenced. By His death He baffled the designs of His own and His people's enemies, and made way for the deliverance of His people out of their hands. By rising again, He proved and proclaimed that He had secured not only His, but all His people's victory over death and the grave. And so ascending gloriously on high, He entered into the enjoyment of a reward that was in all respects suited to the humiliation and suffering by which it had been won.

He appeared on earth as a child born and as a son given to us; as born in a stable and laid in a manger; and therefore he now appears in our nature as the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, of whose government and peace there shall be no end. He was looked upon as a root out of the dry ground; and therefore He is now looked to and adored as the parent and producer of all excellence and blessedness throughout the

universe. He subjected Himself on earth to hunger and thirst: and therefore the eyes of all things wait on Him as the Giver of all good; and He feeds them with food convenient for them. He submitted on earth to weariness and pain: and therefore He now appears as the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary, sustaining all creatures, healing all diseases, redeeming the lives of the perishing sons of men from death. He allowed His visage to be more marred than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; and therefore His person now beams with overpowering and eternal splendours. He had not where to lay His head; and therefore He is now manifested, worshipped, and served, as God over all, blessed for ever. His eyes were as a fountain of tears flowing continually because of the sins and wretchedness of men; and therefore they are now become as flames of fire striking terror and despair into all His irreclaimable enemies, and kindling and keeping alive love to Himself in His people's hearts. He lived on earth as a man of sorrows, familiar with grief; and therefore the universe now finds in His presence fulness of joy. While on earth, He was tempted and harassed by the powers of darkness; and therefore He now bruises them under His own and His people's feet. He hid not His face from shame and spitting; and therefore His countenance is now like the sun when shining in its strength. He was despised and rejected of men; and therefore He is now followed and served by the hosts of heaven. They smote Him on the head, after they had placed on it in ridicule a crown of thorns; and therefore He now wears many golden crowns. They put on Him mock robes of royalty, in scorn of His kingly claims; and therefore He is now upon the throne of the universe, arrayed in raiment white as snow, clothed with light as with a garment, wearing a vesture which though dipped in blood,

has this inscription written on it, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." They thrust into His hands contemptuously the form of a sceptre; and therefore He now really wields the sceptre of unlimited dominion, and rules the nations with a rod of iron. They insultingly bowed the knee before Him, and hailed Him as their would-be King; and therefore it is decreed, that either wittingly or by compulsion, every creature shall offer profound and eternal homage to His name. They laughed Him to scorn; and therefore He now laughs at the calamities of His inveterate foes, and mocks when their fear cometh. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and therefore He is now the Lamb in the midst of the throne, engaging all eyes, and receiving the worship of adoring hosts.

2. Look again at the glory in which the Lord Jesus shall be revealed, when He cometh at the day of judgment. Did He appear on earth in great outward meanness? He shall be seen coming at last in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. Was this earth unmoved by His presence when He dwelt upon it? At His second coming it shall shake to its foundations. Even at the time when Jesus was among men, bringing life and immortality to light, did they continue to eat and drink, to buy and sell, to plant and build, to marry and give in marriage, and to banish all concern about unseen and eternal things as before? His second coming shall fatally surprise them, effectually rouse them from their insensibility, and leave them without a refuge. Did He not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets? He shall come with the great sound of a trumpet that shall raise the dead. Were His attendants here a few humble illiterate followers? His retinue then shall be the countless hosts of heaven. Do His enemies stoutly resist His calls, fiercely oppose His cause, and greatly harass His people? Their

opposition shall be utterly quelled, when He is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of His Son. Did He stand as a criminal at the bar of human judgment, forsaken and even disowned by His very friends, and laden with reproaches and insults by His powerful and cruel foes? He shall fill the great white throne of judgment; and, with the aid of His angels, He shall gather all nations before Him, and make them to stand at His tribunal; and He shall then separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. Was He condemned by wicked men? As the Judge of all, He shall then pass an irrevocable sentence on all mankind. Did He submit to die? He shall then have in His hands the keys of hell and death, and award eternal death to all His enemies, and everlasting life to all His friends and followers. Did He die in the face of creation? Creation shall die before His face, when He comes again; from before His face the heavens and the earth shall fly away. Do the great and powerful, as well as the mass of meaner men, still set themselves against the Lord? In that day every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, as well as every bondman and every freeman, shall in vain hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? When He was on earth, His hearers were offended at Him as an instructor, and refused the lessons of His wisdom because they thought of Him as the carpenter's son: but when He

comes again, they shall be compelled to acknowledge Him as the searcher of their hearts; they shall tremble at His presence, as they find Him bringing every work into judgment with every secret thing; and even the most plausible dissemblers shall be exposed and confounded by Him, and driven from His presence as workers of iniquity. When formerly here, the character and circumstances of the few followers who adhered to Him added to His humiliation in the eyes of the world; but when He comes again, He shall be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe: He will raise their bodies from the dead fashioned like to His own glorious body: He will acquit them from all the charges that are brought against them by their enemies, and acknowledge them as His redeemed and faithful servants and children, and make them to stand at His own right hand, clothed in His righteousness, and full of His Spirit, like the queen in gold of Ophir: and after He has pronounced their welcome to His kingdom, and employed them as His assessors in sentencing His and their enemies to everlasting exclusion from His presence, He shall place upon their heads their promised crowns of glory, and conduct them to their exalted and happy abode in His Father's house, and make them to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

3. Look now at the glory which Christ is to have throughout eternity, of which His transfiguration furnished a glimpse, and see its appropriateness to His obedience unto death as the Redeemer.

At the day of judgment, His redeeming work is, in an important sense, completed. His mediatorial kingdom in its present form then comes to an end. All the sinners given to Him in the Father's everlasting covenant with Him are at length redeemed from all evil, and presented faultless before the presence of His glory. There

are no more darkened souls to be enlightened by Him; no more guilty consciences to be sprinkled by His peace-speaking and cleansing blood; no more trembling penitents to be interceded for in the presence of the Father; no more rebellious sinners to be subdued by His kingly power. All belonging to Him as the Redeemer are at length delivered from all sin and misery, and presented to Himself a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And, as in these respects His mediatorial work is then accomplished, so we are told that "then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, &c."¹

We are not, however, to imagine that even then Christ, as God-man, God the Redeemer, shall disappear from the eyes of the universe. We are not to suppose that He shall henceforth cease to be honoured with the homage and the adorations at present rendered to His name. On the contrary, the splendour in which He shined forth on the mount of transfiguration is a token and a foretaste of the glory which shall surround Him as the incarnate God for ever. He still, and throughout eternity, continues to be God manifested in our nature. The displays of His divine excellence and glory, given in and by means of His humanity, shall never be withdrawn from the view of admiring intelligences. The virtues that adorn His character shall shine forth before the eyes of all created and virtuous intelligences with a perpetual lustre. The praises of the redeemed and holy universe shall for ever be offered to the Lamb. The fruits of His death shall be extolled through ages that never end. In the eternity that is to come the Father shall have the same delight in the Son as in the eternity that is past. The Lord Jesus shall exist and be adored for ever as the image of the invisible God. As the

¹ 1 Cor. xv.

redeeming heir of all things, He shall continue to enjoy the fruits of His purchase. As the Lamb that was slain and redeemed His people with His blood, He shall for ever be seen in the midst of the throne, feeding them and leading them to those living fountains of water that spring from the eternal throne itself, and flow through the city to make it glad. Of that heavenly and enduring city, the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple. The glory of God lightens the city, and the Lamb is the light thereof. As the redeemed shall form for ever the spiritual house from which spiritual sacrifices are unceasingly offered up to God, so Christ shall be for ever the foundation on which it is resting, and the corner stone by which it is knit together. It will, in fact, be found through ceaseless ages that the eternal life which is given by God to the redeemed is still in His Son. Their future blessedness shall consist mainly in their being ever with the Lord Jesus Christ. So that their life shall still be hid with Christ in God. After this world is destroyed, and the whole system of things connected with it has passed away and been succeeded by the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, amidst the glories of the new creation Jesus shall continue for ever the great object of attraction to angels and redeemed men. All eyes shall be turned to Him and fixed on Him as the great Revealer of the uncreated One, and all tongues shall proclaim His glory. Amidst all the changes that happen in the universe, His glory and dominion shall be alike unchangeable and everlasting; and every creature in the universe shall be heard unceasingly saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." The stars themselves shall fall from their courses, and be blotted out from creation; but Jesus shall shine for ever as the bright Morning Star of the

moral firmament. The sun itself may grow dim with age, exhaust its resources of light and heat, and cease to be felt amidst the works of God; but Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, shall continue the ever-flowing yet infinite fountain of light and life to all the family of God. He shall have risen on the wide universe to set no more. He shall shed over creation the light of an everlasting day. And because of the manifestations of His glorious presence, and its enjoyment by the happy inhabitants, there shall through eternity be no night there.

Blessed ends served by a sight of this glory.

A believing view of the glory of Christ, and of the interest which His faithful followers have in it, is needful to secure for them the self-denying holy life and services which are inseparably connected with the actual enjoyment of the blessings of the gospel. Men naturally seek their happiness in the things around them. They look only at things seen and temporal; they seek their portion in the present life. And they receive not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to them; neither can they know them, for they are spiritually discerned. And so if called, as the gospel calls them, to give up their naturally supreme and exclusive desires after these things, while yet they have no true apprehension of any higher good, they treat the call as intolerable, irrational, absurd. So long as they look on the service of Christ chiefly in the light of its being adherence to One who, when on earth, avoided its riches, pleasures, and honours, and requires His followers to sit loose to them also, they cannot be persuaded to fling the world from them because as yet they see nothing better within their reach to take its place. While they see no beauty in Christ, they cling to objects with mere outward and fading charms. While they have

no knowledge or desire of fellowship with heaven, they seek their satisfaction in the fellowships of earth. While they stand unmoved in the unrealised presence of God the Saviour, they bow themselves down to the dust in the presence of mere earthly greatness. Lavishing honours on deeds of mere human ambition, they treat as trifles the wonders of redeeming love. Addicted to the vanities and pleasures of the world, they have no taste for the ways of the spiritual life, and for the joys of the great salvation. Their christianity is a name or a form that is thrown over, but cannot conceal, their utter earthliness. They love the darkness rather than the light, their deeds being evil, and so continue shutting out the light with which the Sun of righteousness is ready to shine into their souls.

While in such a state, the call to follow Christ is loathed as if it were a call to turn their backs on all that is attractive and full of promise, on all that would cheer, elevate, and satisfy them, and to give themselves up to what is gloomy and repulsive, dispiriting and degrading. To revolutionise their thoughts, and desires, and course of life, they require a sight of the glory that flowed to Christ Himself from His sufferings, and of the corresponding glory that He is about to bestow on all who deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him. When He begins to reveal Himself in them as now for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, they are so far made to realise their past sinfulness and vanity, they are washed in His blood and sanctified by His Spirit, and seek to be made strong in His grace, and strive to yield themselves to His service, to do His will, and maintain His honour, and to wait for His coming and kingdom. Henceforth they desire to adore His greatness, and to magnify His grace ; to worship Him as the King of glory, and rejoice in Him as the Prince of peace. They are ready to tremble at His awful voice, and yet gladly listen to His

words of love. While He sees them endeavouring so to behold His glory, as to be filled with a holy fear of Him, He takes pleasure in their persons and services—as the Sun of righteousness, He rises on them with healing in His wings, and they go forth and grow up as calves of the stall, and as willows by the water-brooks—He purges them from their felt impurities, employs them in His service, and enables them in some degree to behold and admire His majesty, and to be glad in His gracious presence—and after giving them in this world such glimpses of His dignity and loveliness as to enable them to see Him through a glass darkly, He takes them to His immediate presence, to see Him as the King in His beauty. Animated with this hope, His faithful followers willingly share in His humiliation now, that they may share in His glory hereafter. They willingly share, if need be, in His temporal straits, that they may be rich in faith and heirs of His kingdom. They learn to suffer with Him on earth, that they may reign with Him in heaven. They endure temptation now, that they may receive at length the crown of life. They labour to crucify their flesh with its affections and lusts, that they may become meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. They are willing to bear the cross here, that they may win the crown hereafter. They somewhat realise their obligation daily to die to the pleasures of time, that they may become qualified for the joys of eternity; to die daily to sense and sin, and to have their life hid with Christ in God, so that when He who is their life shall appear, they may appear with Him in glory.

XIII.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST ON EARTH.

“My kingdom is not of this world.”—JOHN xviii. 36.

THE great design of God in reference to mankind is to redeem from sin and ruin, and to restore to His favour a multitude whom no man can number, and to form them into a society distinct from all other communities on earth, and so prepare them for, and take them to, His immediate presence, to serve Him for ever in heaven. In reference to that multitude, Jesus says, “My kingdom is not of this world.” The Jews were fretting under the Roman yoke, and panting for the Deliverer to come who would enable them to throw it off. When Messiah appeared, not in outward glory but in great outward meanness, and set Himself to establish an empire, not of temporal might and majesty, but of truth and love and purity, in their carnal-mindedness they were enraged against Him to the last degree, and accused Him before the Roman governor of that very crime of treason to the ruling power which they wished Him to commit, but in which He refused to participate. When questioned on this point by Pilate, while He admitted that He was a King and had a kingdom, both His kingship and His kingdom, He declared, were based upon, and bounded by, the heavenly truth which He taught and His followers received. “My kingdom is not of this world.” “I am a King.” “I came into the world to bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” Such considerations as the following

show that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, but a heavenly kingdom.

I. Christ as a King is not of this world.

1. He was greatly inferior to worldly rulers in outward condition. "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." They are born in palaces and nursed on couches of splendour; He was born in a stable and laid in a manger. They are trained amidst all outward advantages; He lived at Nazareth in subjection to labouring parents, and grew up as the carpenter's son. They grasp at temporal dominion; He refused it when put within His reach and pressed on His acceptance. They have around them the rich, the mighty, and the noble; around Him were harmless women and simple fishermen. They rise to their sovereignty by the force of temporal power; He rose to His sovereignty by the force of truth. They display themselves in all outward magnificence; His highest public display took place when, amidst the acclamations of the multitude, He entered Jerusalem on an ass's colt. Their authority is upheld too often by the sacrifice and sufferings of others; He secured His authority by His own sacrifice and sufferings. They triumph over their enemies by destroying them; He triumphed over His by being taken by their wicked hands and crucified and slain.

2. While thus inferior to earthly kings in outward condition, He was, and is, infinitely superior to them in respect of true greatness and glory. They spring from earth; He came from His everlasting place in the bosom of the Father. They are mere human creatures like other men; He is the uncreated One. They are of yesterday; He is the Eternal. They are most mutable; He is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Their judgment is often at fault; His wisdom is unerring. Their power is very limited; He is

Almighty. Their virtue is at best imperfect ; He is unspotted in holiness. Their sense of justice is most defective ; He is perfect in righteousness. Their benevolence is easily exhausted ; He is immeasurable in goodness. Little reliance can be placed on them ; He is unfailing in faithfulness. They cannot make one hair of their heads white or black ; all things were made by Him. They cannot keep themselves alive for a moment ; by Him all things consist. Their dominion is limited and fleeting ; all things are under His absolute and everlasting control.

No doubt He is man as well as God. But even as man, a greatness and glory belong to Him that raise Him far above all earthly kings. They are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin ; His body was formed in His virgin mother by the immediate power of God, and He was born, as He continued to be, without sin—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. The birth of earthly princes may be announced by royal heralds to earthly courts, and hailed by the manifestations of a nation's gladness ; but the birth of Jesus was announced and celebrated by angels from heaven, while, under the guidance of a star, wise men came from the East and offered divine homage at the feet of the infant son of Mary. In becoming God manifested in the flesh, and in fulfilling His ministry on earth, the way was opened up for His formal assumption of a government resting on grounds alike varied and strong ; for while earthly monarchs generally claim to rule by peculiarly sacred rights, Jesus reigns on such manifold, divine, and peculiar grounds as these:—He reigns as God—He reigns by everlasting covenant with the Father—He reigns by the authority which the Father hath formally given to Him—He reigns as having been actually set up by the Father as King upon His holy hill of Zion—He reigns over His people because He has bought them with His precious blood—He reigns over them

because He has conquered their hearts by His almighty grace—He reigns over them with all the authority, power, and fulness belonging to Him as the first-born of every creature, and the first-begotten from the dead, from whom the very existence of the redeemed as new creatures is derived, and of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named—and He reigns by their own choice of Him as their only Lord.

All the emblems and accompaniments of His royalty as God-Man, Mediatorial King, proclaim its infinite greatness. Earthly kings occupy thrones of visible splendour; but Jesus fills the throne of the universe. Their brows are decked each with a royal diadem; but to set forth His sovereignty over all nations and other worlds, it is said that He has on His head many crowns. The sound of their reputation may for a time fill great regions of the earth; but He has a name which is above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. They dwell in literal palaces; but He has a palace in every heart that loves Him: He also inhabits eternity; and in the heaven of heavens, as His special residence, He dwells in the midst of a glory to which no man can approach and live. They are surrounded by officers and servants of all ranks and stations; but He is surrounded by myriads of glorious creatures that minister before His throne. They have legions of soldiers whom they send forth to maintain their dominion and their honour; but He is followed and served by the hosts of heaven, who go everywhere to execute His purposes, whether of judgment or of mercy. They may boast of their dominions; but He is head over all things. They may at times feel as if nothing could withstand them; but He is the only resistless ruler of the universe; heaven, earth, and hell are subject to His will.

But what does this character of the King prove with reference to the kingdom? It proves everything. It

proves that so far as His kingdom can be stamped by Him with His own likeness, it will not be a kingdom of this world. And He does stamp it with His own character, He forms it after His own image. He calls it into existence, and so gives to it what character He pleases. He is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of His kingdom, as well as its King. He makes and fashions it according to His own will. He is not like earthly kings who cannot change the nature of the materials that make up their kingdoms. He exerts Almighty power over the materials of which His kingdom is composed. Its character, therefore, corresponds to His own ; and as He is not of this world, so neither is His kingdom.

II. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are not of this world. That is to say, the means by which He turns them into subjects of His kingdom, and the character to which He forms them, are spiritual, heavenly, and divine.

1. He turns sinful men into subjects of His kingdom by bearing witness unto the truth, that is, by the truth to which He bore witness, and by inclining their hearts to His testimony. Mankind have been and are ruined by falsehood, by false views of themselves and of God, of their present condition and their future prospects, by false views of good and evil, by false views of their various relations and responsibilities. The devil's lie in paradise, believed by our first parents, ruined them and their posterity, by fatally separating them from God. From the moment when that lie was trusted and the declaration of the divine will was disbelieved, onward to the present hour, the human race has been held fast in bondage and darkness by the father of lies. So soon as men are born, they naturally go astray speaking lies. They walk in a vain, an empty, a deceitful show. Their life is made up of delusive and

disappointing imaginations, not of satisfying realities. "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity." The opinions that prevail among and govern them are false and pernicious opinions. They do not like to retain God in their knowledge; they misconceive and misrepresent His character and will, and their own relations, condition, and prospects. Their deities are false gods, vain idols, the work of their own hands. The powers which, as they suppose, govern the world, are invested with a trifling, foolish, or malignant character. The very revelations which the true God has given of Himself, are denied or corrupted by the bulk of those to whom they are given. The redemption provided is set aside in favour of their own refuges of lies. The wise, holy, loving counsels of His word are supplanted by the deceitful, ensnaring, and depraving maxims, customs, and examples that abound in the world on every side. So that, as regards the sentiments of men respecting their relations to God and one another, there is no truth in them, "they delight in lies." The darkness of ignorance, falsehood, and cherished delusions covers the earth, gross darkness the people. And men love the darkness rather than the light, their deeds being evil.

Into a world of fallen creatures filled with and cherishing this fatal, self-chosen mass of falsehood with reference to God and themselves, to time and to eternity, the Son of God came in their nature; and He came, as the "Way" by whom sinners return to God, as Himself "the Truth and the Life." He came to redeem those given to Him out of the world by His Father, by proving to them "the Light of the world," by scattering their darkness, by bringing them into the light, by causing them to love and walk in it, by causing them to feel the resistless force of His guidance as

“the Faithful and True Witness” who “came to bear Witness unto the truth.” The scriptures are the word of Christ that, “dwelling in them richly,” fills them with “all wisdom and understanding.”¹ They are the word of God, quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and proving the discerners of the thoughts and intents of their hearts.² They are the word of truth, with which they are begotten of His own will by the Father of lights,³ and by which they are sanctified.⁴ The Spirit of Christ takes of the things of Christ and shows them to their minds. They thus receive the truth in the love of it, and are saved. They are reconciled to God by the manifestations which they have of Him in Christ, and find life eternal in knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. Hence, in answer to Pilate’s question, “Art Thou a King, then?” Jesus replied that He would establish His kingdom by “bearing witness unto the truth”—that the subjects of His kingdom would be such as are “of the truth”—and that their obedience would be rendered by hearing His voice. Hence, according to Scripture, He is the Truth and the true God;⁵ and so, in that, as in other respects, the fulness of the Godhead; and gathers His people out of the world to Himself, by effectually bearing witness within them to the light and life-giving power of the truth.

2. As the means by which He thus turns sinful men into the subjects of His kingdom are spiritual and divine, so is the character to which He forms them. The character here given of them is, that they are “of the truth” and hear His voice. They hear His voice in the Scriptures,

¹ Col. iii.² Heb. iv.³ James i.⁴ John xvii.⁵ 1 John v.

which throughout testify of Him. They hear His voice in the events of His providence, proclaiming how greatly He is to be feared and how precious is His grace. They hear His voice in their awakened consciousness of their own true condition. And they are made effectually to hear His voice speaking to them in these various ways, by the saving power put forth by His Spirit in their hearts. In this varied and effectual manner Christ speaks to them of their sin and misery—their original entire corruption—their actual manifold transgressions—their liability to perish under the divine displeasure—their inability to help themselves or to find help anywhere in the created universe—His suitability and sufficiency as a Saviour—the fact of His being constantly nigh to them, bringing salvation and pressing it on their acceptance—and the folly of their blindness to His revealed glory and graciousness, and of their indifference to His loving calls. The truth thus declared to them is rendered effectual through demonstration of the Spirit and power from on high. The result is that, thus wrought upon, they renounce the lies in which they lived, and in which the world continues lost; the truth as it is in Jesus takes saving hold of them, and they take saving hold of it; the word is no longer to them like seed dropped on the wayside, or like water spilt upon the ground; it is no longer heard by them as at best temporarily interested hearers, who never become the actual doers of it; in His word of truth they now hear Christ speaking to them in their inmost soul; they awake from their fatal sleep of sin; they rise out of their state of spiritual death; they see themselves lost away from Christ, saved only in Him; they renounce their own wisdom as folly, their own righteousness as filthy rags, their own strength as weakness, and all other personal grounds of dependence as refuges of lies; and they cling to Him as the alone Rock of salvation,

receive Him and rest upon Him, and live by Christ living in them. They seek to have everything taken out of the way that would hinder His exercise of His supremacy over them, and their willing, holy subjection to Him. They lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save their souls. They lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings; and, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. And they plead with Christ, and look to Him to assert His sole right in and over them, to deliver them out of the hands of all their enemies, and to enable them all the days of their life, in holiness and righteousness, to serve Him as the King of glory and the Prince of peace. All of whom these things are essentially true, are born again and become new creatures. Their thoughts, affections, conversation, labours, joys and sorrows, which were all earthly once, are all heavenly now. The Spirit of Christ in them is giving to them the same mind that was in Himself, and assimilating them to His own likeness. They are thus not of the world, even as He was not of the world; and so the kingdom of which they are the subjects is a kingdom not of this world.

III. The spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom is proved by the laws that rule in it.

1. They are heavenly in their origin. The laws of earthly kingdoms, framed by earthly rulers, partake of the mingled wisdom and folly, reasonableness and passion, caution and caprice of the human heart, and of the pride and selfishness and cruelty inherent in our fallen nature. The laws of Christ's kingdom issuing from the eternal throne, embody the mind of the all-perfect, glorious God, are a transcript of His infinite perfections, the offspring of

His combined holiness, justice, goodness, and truth: so that the law of Christ's kingdom is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. The Word of God is the statute-book of Christ's kingdom; and the authority of that Word, and of Him from whom it comes, is the only authority that can, without sin, without, in fact, a blasphemous assumption of the divine prerogative, be pleaded for the enforcement of any laws whatever, within the church or kingdom of Christ. Even good laws, that is, laws good in themselves, derived from any other source, such as civil government, have on that ground no more rightful force within Christ's kingdom or church, than the laws of France, however good, have within the kingdom of Britain. The laws put in operation within the church, must be not only good, but derived from the divine word, the only fountain-head of all law for the kingdom of Christ on earth, and enforced on the authority of that word alone.

2. The laws of Christ's kingdom are heavenly in their sanctions. The laws of earthly kingdoms are enforced by the temporal rewards that accrue to the loyal, and by the temporal punishments that overtake the disobedient and rebellious. But the laws of Christ's kingdom are enforced by admission to spiritual privileges or exclusion from them, and by the prospect of the future and everlasting rewards and punishments that will be bestowed on saints and inflicted on sinners respectively.

3. The laws of Christ's kingdom are heavenly in their end. The end of human laws in civil society, is to keep in outward order the inhabitants of a land. For that purpose, the authority and dominion of earthly rulers extend only to the outward persons and temporal property, the bodies and substance of those who are subject to their power. When they come to the boundary line, separating the region of conscience from the region of the bodies and substance of

the people, the dominion of earthly rulers ceases. Human laws and lawgivers cannot justly, or without enormous wrong, extend their authority and power so as to attempt coercively to control the consciences and hearts of men. But the inward spiritual nature of man is just the region where the laws of Christ's kingdom chiefly take effect. Their great design is to enlighten His people's understandings, to subdue their wills, to regulate their consciences, to govern their hearts, to control their affections and desires. Christ's empire is an empire of truth and love. He sheds abroad in their hearts that love which is the fulfilling of the law. They thus delight in His law after the inward man. They love it, and make it their meditation all the day. And thus by the Spirit it is so written in their hearts, and so embodied in their lives, that they are turned into living epistles of Christ, to be known and read of all men.

IV. The only rulers which Christ has appointed under Himself and over His people, to carry out the laws of His house, are quite distinct from earthly rulers, and of such a spiritual character officially, as well as personally, as to prove that His kingdom is not of this world. They are over them in the Lord, and watch for their souls, as they that must give an account. The persons charged by Christ with this work were, at first, apostles and prophets, whose offices have ceased; and pastors and teachers, or overseers and elders, whose offices still exist, and whose duties still need to be performed. No others have any power from Christ within His kingdom. Civil rulers have no standing in it. He is indeed "Prince of the kings of the earth,"¹ as well "King in Zion." And they are to "bring their glory and honour into the church."² But

¹ Rev. i.

² Rev. xxi.

while they only offer the homage due to Him, where they fence its safety and freedom with their statutes, and so far as occasion permits and requires, assist it with their gifts,¹ they have no more right to enter within its precincts, and to make and execute laws concerning the spiritual duties of its ministers or members, or in the administration of any of its spiritual affairs, than king Uzziah had to attempt by force to enter the temple, and perform the priestly work of offering incense there. "The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of the church, hath therein appointed a government in the hands of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate." They are the pastors and teachers, the overseers and elders of the flock of God, which He has purchased with His blood. They alone are commissioned to teach whatsoever things the Lord has commanded. To them alone, under Christ, obedience and submission are due. The kingdom in which such spiritual rulers alone are to be found, is a kingdom not of this world.

V. The *privileges* and *blessings* which Christ has purchased for, and bestows upon His kingdom, prove its spiritual and heavenly nature. The kingdoms of this world, in proportion to their prosperity, are filled with outward temporal peace and plenty, with earthly riches and sensible enjoyments. But although within the church of Christ temporal blessings may be found to any extent, they are but subordinate and subservient, and not even needful to the enjoyment of its highest and most characteristic mercies. Indeed, often when most depressed in its temporal condition, it is visited and filled with higher than ordinary degrees of spiritual prosperity. And its chief and most peculiar privileges and blessings are such as show it to be a kingdom not of this world.

¹ Psalm lxxii.

1. There are the more outward spiritual privileges of the subjects of the kingdom. Thus they have the word read by, and preached to them, that its entrance may give light and life to their souls. They have the holy sabbath so constantly returning, with its blessed memories, and its exercises of worship and instruction, that, being specially in the Spirit on the Lord's day, they may be fitted for the mercies, the duties, and the trials of the other six days of the week, and prepare for the eternal sabbath, the rest that remaineth for the people of God. They have the house of prayer, and the promise of Christ's presence in it, to render it to them the house of God and the gate of heaven. They have the ordinance of baptism, to signify and seal the cleansing virtue of Jesus' blood, and the regenerating power of His Spirit. They have the table of the Lord, at which to partake by faith of His own body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. And they have the fellowship of saints, in and through which to be brought into fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

2. There are the inward, saving blessings enjoyed by all who are brought into the kingdom. They are pardoned rebels; and that blessing of divine forgiveness is one of which the world has no experience or conception.—The light of God's reconciled countenance is lifted on them; and that is a blessing never sought or found by those who continue saying, "Oh, who will show us any good?"—They are washed from their sins in the blood of Christ; and that is a cleansing unknown to the guilty consciences and unpurified hearts of other men.—They are clothed in the robe of their King's own righteousness; and that raiment is altogether distinct from the purple and fine linen in which others have it as their ambition to be arrayed.—By a gracious adoption of their persons, and

a divine renewal of their nature, they have their place given and preserved to them as sons and daughters in the family of the King; a blessedness of which there is not even the shadow to be found among any others, even the most favoured of the children of men.—They serve Him in the beauty of holiness; while the world goes on in its sinfulness until it perishes in its corruption.—They have a peace which passeth understanding; while others are like the troubled sea that cannot rest.—They advance in their onward, upward path of light till it ends in the brightness of eternal day, where they see the King in His beauty, and dwell in the land that is afar off; while others live on, and die in darkness.

A kingdom full of such privileges and blessings to its subjects even on earth, and to be perfected and filled with glory for ever and ever, cannot be a kingdom of this world.

VI. The extent assigned by Christ to His kingdom shows it to be not of this world.

1. It does not take in all who dwell in any given part of the earth. Worldly kingdoms do so. They embrace as subjects all within a given territory. But the kingdom of Christ is more limited in any land. It embraces only the divinely regenerated portion of the people.

2. On the other hand, it is not confined like earthly kingdoms to fixed portions of the earth. Christ chooses His subjects from among, and has them in the midst of all kindreds and nations, peoples and tongues. And by His command, while obeying their earthly rulers in all temporal things, in all things spiritual they yield obedience only to Him; thus “rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

3. The power of Christ as King within this kingdom is for its sake extended over all lands on earth, and even

over other worlds. He has "all power in heaven and on earth." "All things" are "put under His feet." He is "head over all things to the church." Angels are employed by Him to minister to His redeemed. His and their enemies, earthly and infernal, are restrained and conquered. And He is preparing a place for all His ransomed in the many mansions of His Father's house, even a kingdom that cannot be moved. A kingdom embracing only a portion of the inhabitants of any given earthly kingdom, embracing at the same time inhabitants of all earthly kingdoms, and ruled in as divine a way by a King who rules all nations and all worlds for its sake, is a kingdom not of this world.

VII. The heavenly character of Christ's kingdom is seen in the manner and means of its introduction, maintenance, and advancement. "If," says Jesus, "my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight" for it; "but now is my kingdom not from hence. . . . For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Consider—

1. The way of its introduction. Earthly kingdoms rise to their place in the world by displays of temporal power and splendour. But Christ's kingdom cometh not with observation: it commences in the soul. The truth as it is in Jesus, accompanied by His Spirit, exerts a resistless though unseen power in transforming the hearts of men; and so this kingdom is set up within, as a kingdom not of meat and drink, but of righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

2. The way of its maintenance. Worldly kingdoms maintain themselves, as they rise, chiefly by temporal power: insomuch that, if the rulers of a country show

the want of such power, that country soon falls before the power of internal strifes, or of foreign foes. Christ's kingdom is maintained by spiritual means, by the influence of His word, and of His cross, and by the power of His almighty grace. His people are kept in subjection to Him, by His truth faithfully yet lovingly administered, and by His Spirit graciously bestowed. His and their enemies are resisted and overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of His testimony.

3. The way of its advancement. The kingdoms of the world advance in it by force of arms, or by other demonstrations and exercises of physical force. But the kingdom of Christ refuses the authoritative and compulsory aid of carnal weapons. It is not by human might or power that His kingdom comes. It is not the wise, mighty, and noble of the world that are chiefly employed by Christ to help on His cause, but the foolish, the weak, and the despised. It is not by arts of human policy, but by the preaching of the word, that Christ promotes His reign. He subdues His enemies, and adds them to His kingdom, not by outwitting them, or by crushing them, but by enlightening, persuading, and converting them. The word is the sword of the Spirit which He girds upon His thigh, when He goes forth to advance the cause of truth, and meekness, and righteousness, upon the earth. It would seem, indeed, that the final triumphs of His kingdom on the earth shall be introduced by His visible providential judgments, that His right hand shall do terrible things in putting down His enemies, and that He shall thus show on His vesture and on His thigh, the name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." But even then His word shall be the main quiver from which he takes the arrows that He renders strong in the hearts of His enemies, so that they fall under Him. By the divine power which He gives to the truth in their con-

sciences and hearts, and by the wonderful work of grace that He thus performs in and upon them, He will show more and more impressively that the weapons of His kingdom are not earthly but heavenly weapons, and that His pre-eminently glorious name is "THE WORD OF GOD."

VIII. The past history, present position, and future destiny of this kingdom prove that it is not of this world.

I. Its past history. Fixed in the everlasting covenant of grace between the Father and the Son, the moment that the promise to bruise the serpent's head began to take effect, this kingdom commenced its existence. Abel had scarcely been brought into it as the kingdom of grace when, under the murderous hand of Cain, he passed into it as the kingdom of glory. Seth, Enoch, and Noah also, and other graciously righteous men, belonged to it. So did Melchisedek and Job. Abraham and his numerous household, whom he trained to walk in the way of the Lord, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and their families, who, like themselves, were children of the promise, as given in covenant to Abraham, were subjects of this kingdom in the visible form which, in his and their days, the kingdom received and retained. Under the dispensation of Moses, the children of Israel, as distinct from all other nations, were made and preserved, in outward and visible form, a kingdom of worshippers of Jehovah. At the same time, the kingdom of Christ continued, through all these antediluvian, patriarchal, and Jewish ages, in a comparatively incipient, elementary, imperfect condition. The great spiritual realities of Christ's person and work continued to be shrouded in types and figures and prophecies, the full meaning and force of which were not realised. Bright and honoured subjects of His kingdom indeed, not a few patriarchs and prophets and kings and righteous men became. Still they lived amidst the

mists and shadows that hung over the glowing visions which they had of the Messiah's approaching reign. When Jesus began His ministry, His announcement was, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and He sent forth His apostles to make the same announcement. He taught the nature of His kingdom, the regeneration, repentance, humility, and self-denial required in its subjects. The gospel which He preached was the gospel of the kingdom. To expose the vanity of all mere formalism, He said to His hearers, "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," "the kingdom of God is within you." He soon made it manifest that His kingdom had for its foundation His death and resurrection and ascension to the right hand of power, and that it would be advanced on earth by the Holy Spirit being sent by Him, and coming in power, to make the ordinances and laws that He commanded His servants to keep and obey, effectual to the salvation of men. Accordingly, after He rose from the grave, and before He ascended to heaven, He spoke to His disciples of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." And when immediately after He took His place on the mediatorial throne, by the remarkable outpouring of His Spirit on the day of Pentecost, He gave a great impulse to the progress of His kingdom, and an indication of the effectual manner in which He would advance and establish it upon the earth. Following up His instructions, and under His guidance, the apostles were found preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.¹ And all the converts from heathenism are summarily described as delivered by God the Father from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son.²

Thus constituted and established on the earth by the

¹ Acts viii. 28.

² Col. i.

personal ministry of Christ, and by the labours of His apostles after Him, and under the promise of His presence with it always to the end, and of the indwelling and in-working of His Spirit in all His people, His kingdom was empowered to maintain and spread His glory as its King, and at the same time to secure its own well-being by doing whatsoever He has commanded. So situated, this kingdom has for eighteen hundred years described a chequered history. His called, chosen, and faithful people have, too generally, been but the smaller number among the multitudes of mere professors of Christianity, who have filled the visible nominal kingdom of Christ. Still He has had through all generations such a people, a people who have found salvation in Him as at once the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the Lamb that was slain, and now the Lamb in the midst of the throne. His faithful followers, indeed, have been constantly forced into deadly conflicts with His and their secret and open foes, but with the eyes of faith they have seen Him at their head as their crowned and Almighty King, with His sword girded on His thigh, and bow in hand, riding forth, conquering and to conquer, in the cause of meekness and truth and righteousness. And while time after time His witnesses have had to suffer much, and even to seal their testimony with their blood, and to triumph only by dying, and then appear in His more immediate presence in their white robes of holiness and joy, fresh witnesses have been raised up by Him still to bear aloft the banner of their King, until ever and anon He has risen up to judgment, and for the time struck with terror their and His adversaries, great and small, and made them fain to cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

The eighteen centuries that have passed since the Lord Jesus took His place on the mediatorial throne have thus

been centuries of conflict and of affliction for His faithful servants. In the course of these centuries, indeed, bright seasons of spiritual revival of light and gladness have intermingled with the long-continued darkness, and suffering, and sorrow that have so filled His kingdom. Nevertheless, all through these ages, open adversaries have raged against it, and myriad traitors have taken and kept possession of it and laid it desolate. Yet the kingdom survives. Other kingdoms have one after another perished from around it. Others still are preparing themselves for a similar end. But the kingdom lives and has a footing, a hidden life and power, in the midst of them, that all the powers and agencies of earth and hell are unable to touch. Even when Christ has permitted His servants to be reduced to the smallest number, and crushed to the lowest depths of weakness, and helplessness, and sorrow, the Spirit of life from God, as the Spirit of Christ, has never failed to enter into them again, and, from such depths, to raise them to heights of resistless power, while suddenly striking their proudest adversaries with terror, and overwhelming in ruin all who refused to give glory to God.

2. As to the present position of Christ's kingdom on the earth, while there is much in it that is fitted to excite both apprehension and hope, there is also enough to prove that it is not a kingdom of this world. There is much in the condition of the kingdom and of the world around it to fill its friends with apprehension. The gospel of the kingdom is not the gospel, or among the numerous gospels which it has become fashionable to inculcate and accept. From such fashionable gospels God's holiness, justice, and truth are eliminated, and little is left but a lauded so-called fatherhood in God, that is not expected to deal strictly with sinners. Sin is pronounced to be not so malignant and destructive as it has been long called. The morally-ruined

condition of mankind is denied. The redemption-work of Christ is reduced to a human example of self-sacrifice. His proper divinity is left in doubt or set aside. The divine personality and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit are given up. The retributions of eternity are treated as a fable. The grounds of acceptance with God and the scriptural qualifications for heaven are superseded by grounds and qualifications that every man is naturally able to provide for himself. The divine inspiration and infallible truth of the scriptures are disbelieved. The obligations of the fourth commandment, or law of the sabbath, are disowned. Secular education is taking the place of the former christian education of the young. Family worship is ceasing to be observed in a large proportion of the families of the, as yet, church-going. The amount of attendance on the services of the sanctuary is manifestly diminishing, especially among the young. The sacred bonds that united parents and children, and masters and servants, are being greatly loosened. The marriage bond itself is beginning to lose the sacredness with which it was universally regarded in times gone past. The prosperity and wealth and endless privileges that of late years have been vouchsafed to this and other lands, instead of leading the recipients to God, have generated and fostered luxury and self-indulgence, love of pleasure, dislike of moral restraints, and immeasurable self-confidence; and have tempted, and are more and more tempting, many in all classes, from the highest to the humblest, to excesses in sin, at the reports of which the sober-minded stand aghast, and say, "What shall the end of these things be?" Profaneness and immorality, often veiled, often with unblushing openness, are in active operation everywhere. Business transactions are extensively debased by falsehood and dishonesty, till mutual trust is dying out to a great extent between man and man. Science

is labouring to separate God from His works, and to shut Him out as a mere spectre from the minds of men. Nations are eliminating, or preparing to eliminate from their legislation and government, all acknowledgment of the presiding Deity, and of their dependence on Him; and are acting as if their destinies were absolutely in their own hands. Various of the most effective restraints that were wont to be laid on human depravity are being removed, and a few steps further in the direction of self-disposal and self-assertion may open the floodgates of human passion, and spread its desolations far and wide. Christ's own visible kingdom is so commingled with the world that, as His kingdom, it is scarcely discernible in large regions of christendom amidst the ignorant, erring, free-thinking, false-hearted, false-speaking pretenders to christianity that have overrun and taken possession of its sphere; while, as to the world at large, darkness still covers the earth, gross darkness the people.

Even amidst this widespread moral and spiritual desolation, however, the kingdom of Christ is still to be found. It is maintained by Him in the persons of the thousands of willing subjects, and servants, and followers, in whom He reigns by His grace, to whom His kingdom has come, not in word but in power, who personally and experimentally know it as a kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Most of them may be hidden ones, hidden from the eyes of men who know not them as they knew not Himself while on earth, and as they know Him not even now, though He is Lord of all. But though living in the midst of multitudes that do not believe in Him, Christ has in many lands a people that are His kingdom notwithstanding, His kingdom on the earth; and He is adding habitually to their numbers by gathering sinners out of the world and bringing them into His church from

all kindreds, and nations, and peoples, and tongues. And to know them who are Christ's, and who form His present kingdom on the earth, is to know enough to prove that it is a kingdom not of this world.

3. The future blissful destiny of Christ's kingdom even on earth is as certain as the divine faithfulness and power can make it—and still more impressively proves that it is indeed not a worldly but a spiritual and heavenly kingdom.

No doubt there goes on for the present a double process as regards this kingdom. Multitudes in what are called christian lands, and themselves in great numbers still bearing the christian name, are waxing worse and worse in respect of their latitudinarianism in sentiment and their laxness of manners; while such as have received grace to believe in and love the truth are being kept alive in Christ, and to their broken, scattered, and feeble, yet not hopeless, ranks, some are being gathered in from every land and added to the numbers of the saved. During the progress of this double process, the friends of gospel truth are often very weary, while carnal wisdom and temporal power, and outward prosperity and riches, and all the arts of life, cast their boasted but delusive splendours over the earth, and tempt mankind to feel and speak and act, as if they were the absolute lords of creation, without any superior to cross or to control them. But even in the midst of this widespread and yet increasing materialism, and of the sadness and fear with which believing men regard it, the kingdom of Christ exists with a living, divine energy in it, which all the powers of earth and hell cannot reach, cannot even realise. And though this energy remains for the time a comparatively latent, slumbering energy, it is not dead. Christ, who wields it, is not dead. He is the living One, and as the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, He is about to awake, to rise up, and make His presence to be

felt, in ways of judgment that will overwhelm His enemies and sweep them away, and leave them only in broken and scattered fragments, to hide themselves in holes and corners, while His saints enter into the dominion of the earth. Then woe to all the kingdoms and nations that have refused subjection to the King of Zion. His kingdom shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and shall itself stand for ever. The kingdoms of the earth that remain, shall then become His kingdom, and He shall reign for ever and ever. And before Him that sitteth on the throne, and before the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, alleluias shall ascend from all the hills and plains of earth, because the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the Governor among the nations. The Lord shall be King over all the earth in that day; there shall be one Lord, and His name One.¹ In the light with which His presence fills His kingdom all nations of the saved shall walk, and kings and nations shall bring their glory and honour into it.² Everything that offends, and all that do iniquity, shall be cast out of His kingdom then, and on every person and thing that remain in it, shall be inscribed, "Holiness unto the Lord."³ And throughout the ages of truth and peace, of holiness and love, of freedom from enemies, and of favour with God and man, and of all outward and inward prosperity, that pass over the kingdom of Christ, the successive generations that are born in it and born again into it, may become vast enough to exceed even the nations of the wicked in ages past that have been turned into hell, and so to form at last a multitude alike marvellous for their countless numbers and their ex-

¹ Zech. xiv.

² Rev. xxi.

³ Zech. xiv.

ceeding and eternal weight of glory. Christ's kingdom, thus made up of all that from the entrance of sin onwards have shared in His redeeming grace, shall then be ready to be presented by Him to His Father, and to form, as it would seem, the most prominent part of that absolute, boundless, and everlasting kingdom, in which God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost shall be all in all.

Practical lessons.

1. Every one to whom the word of this salvation comes ought, as the most indispensable of all things to his own well-being, to seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, remembering that He never can find this kingdom so long as he rests contented with a place in the visible church—that the kingdom is within—and that it is only by being born of the Spirit that any can enter into it, or see it, and have it set up in them, as a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

2. Every one who, by the regenerating grace of the Spirit of Christ, is born into this kingdom ought to live suitably to his heavenly citizenship. Thus only can he feel at home among the children of Zion, who are joyful in their King, show forth the honour of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and induce others to repent of their opposition to Him, and to come and offer their homage at His feet.

3. A large proportion of the visible churches of Christ are unworthy to bear His name, and have reason to look for the fearful and fatal judgments, by which He will make way for raising up His kingdom to its promised and approaching state of light and purity, of prevalence and power. The visible church is like the seed sown, of which a fourth part only yielded proper fruit; or like the field on which tares, extensively sown by an enemy, grew up and intermingled with the wheat; or like the net in which bad fishes were

caught and mixed up in large numbers with the good; or like the virgins that went forth to meet the bridegroom, of whom, while a portion were wise, the others were foolish; or like the mixture in the same flock of goats with the sheep. To cleanse His kingdom from the impurities and wickedness by which it is defiled, Christ is about to purge it even by fiery judgments, and to fill it with "living" saints; and then He will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night, and upon all the glory shall be a defence.¹

4. In the view of Jesus' words to the Roman governor about His kingdom, and of its destined and approaching supremacy on earth, the ruling powers had better have a care of how they deal with this kingdom of Christ, or any of its sections within their territory. It does not exist for them; but they exist for it. The whole world is in the hands of Christ, as the platform on which He is gathering into His kingdom all of mankind given to Him as their Redeemer by the Father. The rulers of the earth would therefore need to weigh well their relations and actings to the word, and the church, of Christ. If they cast off His bands, He will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. If they say to the church, Bow down that we may go over thee; or if they tempt her by bribes, or compel her by power to lay herself down as the dust, or as the street, that they may go over her, God will put into their hands and make them to drink the cup of trembling, even the cup of His fury.¹ If, on the other hand, they stand aloof from the church, and refuse all favour to her and her mission, more than to her and her King's enemies, they will have to face and feel the power of His threatening, the nation

¹ Isa. iv.

² Isa. li.

and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.¹

5. To every professing church, to every nation, and to every human being, to which or to whom the word of Christ is brought, He presents but one alternative; and that is, either to be in willing subjection to Him and serve Him, and to employ their time, their thoughts, their energies, their substance, and their prayers, in advancing the honour of His name and the interests of His kingdom all around them and throughout the world, or to be dealt with, and disposed of, by Him, as among His adversaries.

6. Whatever afflictions still betide Christ's kingdom on the earth, this kingdom and all belonging to it shall survive and be for ever glorified; while all that is without it is overtaken by decay and death and final ruin. The powers of earth may still corrupt and enslave, or discountenance and depress it. Other evil agencies may labour to disfigure its character, to create and foster confusions and conflicts within it, or even to undermine and destroy the very foundations on which it rests. Worse still, multitudes who professedly belong to the kingdom may assail and strive to set aside the very truths on which it lives, and which it is upheld to spread over the earth. Its enemies are indeed numerous and powerful, while its friends seem few and feeble. But Christ is on their side and at their head, and from before Him all their and His enemies shall be scattered; and their triumph, which is the triumph of His kingdom, is secure. For whatever belongs to the world shall decay and perish. All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the field. The world passeth away, and the lust thereof. The greatest kingdoms of the past are gone. Existing kingdoms shall also

¹ Isa. lx.

perish, one after another. Even this famous kingdom of ours, with its unparalleled extent of possessions and resources, is all too probably destined at length to manifest inherent and fatal seeds of decay. If the secularism that now prevails supplant the light of the gospel among us, the sun of Britain's greatness shall ere long set to rise no more. Even the boasted achievements of philosophy, science, and art shall by and by disappear in the light of the higher, deeper, more comprehensive and brighter forms of wisdom that fill the earth. But in the midst and by means of the increase of all true knowledge, the kingdom of Christ, His kingdom of truth and love, shall become more extensive and luminous, till the earth is filled with His glory. It shall break in pieces and consume all the powers and agencies opposed to it, and shall itself stand for ever. It shall even survive the final burning up of the visible creation, and be throughout eternity the most glorious part of the boundless and everlasting kingdom of God.

XIV.

THE RELATIONS OF CHRIST TO NATIONS AND THEIR RULERS, AND THEIR DUTY TO HIS TRUTH AND KINGDOM.

“Jesus Christ . . . the Prince of the kings of the earth.”—REV. i 5.
“He is the Governor among the nations.”—PS. xxii. 23. “My kingdom is not of this world. . . . Art Thou a king then? . . . To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”—JOHN xviii. 36, 37.

A FORMER discourse was given to the consideration of the more immediate and the principal subject of Jesus' words to Pilate, viz., His character as a king; His kingdom; and the truth by which He creates and rules it; its subjects, laws, under rulers, privileges, and saving blessings; its extent and duration; and the way and manner of its introduction, maintenance, and advancement on the earth. This is an elevating subject for continual meditation and discourse. “They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom.”

Let us at present consider the relations of Christ to nations and their rulers, and their duty to His truth and kingdom.

The conduct of Pilate and of Herod to Christ, and of the rulers of Jerusalem to the Apostles, is expressly declared in Acts iv. to be prophetically condemned in the second Psalm. In that Psalm, the most awakening views are presented of the sins and dangers of civil rulers, and their

obligations and only path of safety, in reference to Christ, and to His people and His cause: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." So also in other passages of the Old Testament: "He is the Governor among the nations."¹ "By Him kings reign and princes decree justice."² "He standeth in the congregation of the mighty, He judgeth among the gods."³ He shall "strike through kings in the day of His wrath."⁴ "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee" (*i.e.*, the church) "shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."⁵ The "kingdom shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."⁶

Not less plainly does Christ in the New Testament

¹ Ps. xxii.

² Prov. viii.

³ Ps. lxxxii.

⁴ Ps. cx.

⁵ Isa. lx.

⁶ Dan. ii.

scriptures reveal the relation and responsibilities of civil rulers to Himself and His church. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them, &c.;" or, as the Apostle, in writing to the Ephesians, says, "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" . . . hath "set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church,"¹

In these passages the spread of the gospel throughout the world, and the maintenance and advancement of all the interests of His church on earth, are placed by Christ Himself under the shield of that power and authority which He continually exercises over nations and their rulers, as well as over the hierarchies of heaven. And His power and authority over the rulers and nations of the world, involve not only His ability to compel their subserviency to the advancement of His truth and kingdom, but also their obligation to become the willing instruments in His hands for this great end.

A striking confirmation is given, in the Revelation to John, of this view of the fact and the design of the power and authority which Christ exercises as King of nations and King of kings, and the duty which kings and nations therefore owe to Him and His truth and kingdom. That book, in giving a prophetic symbolic history of the progress of the church from the ascension of her Head to the end of time, sets forth His providential government of both the church and the world. In doing so, the book gives great

¹ Ept. i.

prominence to the sovereignty of Christ over the nations as displayed in His destroying all of them who refuse to submit to it, and to advance the interests and to form part of His kingdom. In fact, the book commences with what has been well called the keynote to all that follows—viz., a representation of Christ as “the faithful and true witness, the first begotten of the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth.”¹

In the character thus assigned to Christ, He is now jealously watching the conduct of all nations and of their rulers to His gospel and His church. When these are treated by them with indifference, neglect, contempt, and opposition, His displeasure is awakened, and manifested in His dealings with them one after another. Further, as judgments, left to their own influence alone, serve only to harden those on whom they come, so, under those which, as foretold, at length overtake mankind, the nations and their rulers repent not to give God the glory. Accordingly unclean spirits go forth and take possession of kings and people, and gather them together to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. And they make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb overcomes them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings. And so the issue is, that having ruled in the midst of His enemies, till such as would not yield to Him and obey Him are put under His feet, all that survive surrender themselves to Christ as His willing subjects and servants, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

Christ has actually governed this world, and His redeemed people in it, from the beginning. But it was after He became God manifested in the flesh, and finished the work given to Him to do, and at His ascension to the right hand of

¹ Rev. i.

power, that, in His character of God-man Redeemer, He formally began His mediatorial reign as Prince of the kings of the earth. His servants are now prophesying before many people, and nations, and tongues, and kings.¹ The heathen persecutors, whom Satan in the first ages of the church's era stirred up against those who had the testimony of Jesus Christ, at length fell and perished under the wrath of the Lamb.² The antichristian powers that then arose in Europe combined with the popish church against the gospel, and enabled that mother of harlots to make herself drunk, for ages and ages, with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus. And again at length Christ comes forth as KING of kings and LORD of lords, and smites these guilty nations with a rod of iron, and clears away all hindrances to the establishment of His kingdom on the earth.

The prosperity or ruin of nations is thus bound up with their acknowledgment or denial of the gospel of Christ, with their favour for, or their enmity to, His church. The conviction of this took the deepest hold of all ranks of men, when the blessed Reformation broke forth in Europe. Rulers and people then felt and acted on their relations and responsibilities to Christ, and to His truth and kingdom. They combined to spread His word, to multiply the teachers of it, and to fortify the church within their own and other lands. True indeed, alas! as human nature corrupts all truth and purity by coming in contact with them, in this case, the rulers of the nations, when acting for the spread of true religion, did not confine themselves as jealously as they ought to have done, to their own province in reference to sacred things. Instead of acting only about them and for them, they interfered too generally in them, and so

¹ Rev. x.

² Rev. vi. 12.

crossed the church's divine and exclusive right, under Christ, of managing these things according to His word.

Now, however, many men are running into the opposite extreme, and in their determination to remove all traces of civil authority from within the church, they are bent on sweeping away all tokens of national countenance and aid from around her. And so it becomes of special importance to find and lay open, if possible, the path of duty to the truth and kingdom of Christ, which lies between these two extremes, and to secure the honour that is due to the Lord Jesus, as King of kings, and Governor among the nations, as well as King of saints.

I. The relation which civil rulers, to whom the divine word has come, are required by Christ to occupy to His truth and kingdom.

I leave out of view at present, or rather I take for granted, the personal obligation lying on them, as on all men, to embrace the Saviour for their own individual salvation, and to serve Him on the earth; and I desire attention to their official duty as rulers, to religion and the church. This duty is owing partly to the truth, viewed in itself, and partly to the church, as the pillar and ground of the truth.

1. Their duty to Christ and His truth, viewed apart from their duty to His church.

(1.) Civil rulers are bound to acknowledge the word of Christ as a divine rule to them. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."¹ "Be wise now, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth."² "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

(2.) As all civil government, while it flowed from Christ

¹ Jer. xxii.

² Ps. ii.

as Creator, is placed in subjection to Him as mediatorial King, civil rulers in administering it are bound officially, in their laws and administration, to offer homage to Christ, as Prince of the kings of the earth and King in Zion.

(3.) As civil rulers are manifestly required, in administering civil government, officially to perform certain acts of a strictly religious nature, they ought to perform these acts in avowed accordance with the will of Christ, and with an avowed regard to His glory. *First*, civil rulers have to open their courts with prayer for wisdom and truth, righteousness and mercy, to guide their judgments. But such prayer, in order to its being heard, must be offered not to the imaginary god of Deists, or of Unitarians, or to the virgin Mary, or through her intercession, any more than to the god of Mohammedans or Mormons, or the gods of Paganism, but to the Triune God, through the one Mediator. And in spite of men's fancies, a national creed becomes indispensable, if such prayers are to be true worship, and not a mockery. *Second*, civil rulers require to keep up the administration of oaths over the whole kingdom. But oaths are one of the most solemn exercises of religion, the most solemn acts of worship, the most solemn appeal to the Searcher of hearts and the Judge of all, that can be engaged in on this side of the final judgment-seat. And unless it is held that rulers and the nation are entitled to make a form and a mockery of this whole solemnity, and to offer such continual affronts to the Majesty of heaven as will bring down upon the land His displeasure, they are bound to further among the people, the knowledge and fear of the Most High, whose name they so often officially require the people to take into their lips. *Third*, civil rulers are bound to call for national acts of humiliation before God in times of danger, and for national acts of thanksgiving to God in times of deliverance. But their duty is not performed in such cases, by merely invit-

ing the people to engage in such acts of worship, without showing the least care as to what God, true or false, the people supplicate or magnify; without giving the least indication of the character of the Being with whom the nation has to do; without making the slightest allusion to the sentiments that become the people in approaching unto Him. In short, if warranted officially to invite their people to seek unto God in such seasons, they are bound to endeavour to indicate how they are to seek and find Him.

(4.) Such social immoralities and crimes as polygamy, adultery, and incest, intemperance and violence, robbery and fraud, perjury and slander, civil rulers are bound to prevent and punish. They are bound to do this in their character of "ministers of God" to the people for their "good;" in other words, as servants of God, required in this manner to avert His anger from the land, and to secure His favour to it, by repressing such outward wickedness, and by securing the practice of outward purity, sobriety, honesty, and truth.

(5.) Profane swearing, open blasphemy, and gross outrages on the sanctity of the sabbath, are impieties which, if unchecked, are sure utterly to demoralise society, and to bring down destroying judgments on the land in which they are allowed to prevail. It therefore becomes civil rulers to repress such wickedness with a firm hand.

(6.) As the youth of a land are destined to be a blessing or a bane to it, according as they are, or are not, trained religiously and morally, as well as secularly, and as the daily school is the place for the whole of this training, if it is to be thoroughly and effectively given, so as to secure the proper results, civil rulers are bound to aim at, or to aid in securing, a system of education for the young, which shall combine sound moral and religious with secular instruction.

(7.) Tens of thousands of our countrymen are engaged in the naval and military services, and are, therefore, so situated that they cannot have, as at home, free access to divine ordinances of worship and instruction, or any access at all except as these ordinances are provided for them by civil rulers, at the national expense. It therefore is the duty of the civil government to provide for soldiers and sailors, at the public expense, the means of religious instruction and worship, according to the word of Christ.

(8.) The inmates of jails and penitentiaries and poor-houses being similarly situated, in reference to their highest interests, civil rulers ought to make a similar provision for them.

(9.) In like manner, wherever there are found outcast and neglected poor in a land, with none to care for them, civil rulers are bound to exercise over them a parental care. And that implies their obligation to provide food for their souls as well as food for their bodies. And the Lord will not hold rulers or their nation guiltless where this duty is neglected.

(10.) Finally, under this head, as the ascendancy of a professedly christian government in heathen lands can be rightfully retained and made a blessing, or retained at all, only by spreading in them the christian faith, it behoves such a government to assist in diffusing divine truth through such benighted regions, and in bringing them out of darkness into marvellous light.

Thus, apart from the formal relation of civil rulers to the church of Christ, and although there were no church in the land, were that a conceivable thing, here is a large and varied field of christian work, which civil rulers must occupy, if they are of the truth and hear the voice of Christ, and do their duty to Him as Governor among the nations, Prince of the kings of the earth.

2. The duty of civil rulers to the church or kingdom of Christ.

(1.) They are bound to recognise that kingdom, not as it is to be found merely in one or two sections of it, but as it is found in all the sections of it which the land contains. That is the way in which, according to His word, Christ Himself owns His church. And, therefore, that is the way in which rulers who would obey His word must own it.

(2.) In order to their thus recognising the kingdom of Christ in the land, they must be able to distinguish, and must officially distinguish accordingly, those communities that are churches of Christ, and those communities which, whatever they call themselves, are not true churches of Christ. Societies which are characterised by principles and practices that are essentially opposed to the word of Christ are not to be confounded, even by civil rulers in their legislation, with those whose leading principles are in accordance with that word.

(3.) Civil rulers are bound, not only to recognise the kingdom of Christ in all true sections of it, but to regard them and deal with them in proportion to their faithfulness to Christ, as, in respect even of the temporal interests of the population, the greatest benefactors to the land whom it contains. Civil rulers are to remember that godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come, and that to any people who can be made to seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, the promise is that all things shall be added. And for the sake of the temporal good to society, which is the end of their government, they are bound to foster that kingdom, which is thus the mainstay of their government, and the main security for the well-being of the land which they govern.

Christianity reaches where civil law cannot enter. It

reaches and enlightens the conscience, and so makes it an effective rule of action to men. It reaches and purifies the heart, till in all their relations men act from the highest and holiest motives. It thus exercises an all-controlling power, in ten thousand circumstances and actions, in which the mere human law of civil government utterly fails to exert any power whatever.

Even where mere human law can reach, and ought to put forth its authority and power, the execution of it is rendered unspeakably less needful, and therefore proportionately milder, by the presence and pervading power of christianity, than if the latter were absent or unfelt. Moreover, there are endless crimes which arise among corrupt men, and operate to destroy their social state. There are the idleness, intemperance, prostitution, and commercial frauds, the violence to persons and property, the oppressive laws, and the desolating wars that spring from human selfishness, pride, and ambition, and the poverty, disease, and endless miseries, and all the crushing burdens with which such vices and crimes load a country in its efforts to meet and to restrain them. All these disorders and woes are lessened, in proportion as christianity prevails, and purifies its subjects in every class and station. And they would be done away if christianity were but universally to prevail. These considerations show that christianity is the chief defence of nations, the great source of men's temporal and social well-being, as well as of their spiritual and eternal well-being. And it is difficult and scarcely right to have patience with any man or any set of men, of ordinary intelligence and powers of observation, who, in the face of facts like these, persistently deny that it is part of the official duty of civil rulers to foster the truth and kingdom of Christ within the land, with assiduous care.

(4.) In order that the church may fulfil the work assigned to her by Christ, and so scatter blessings in her path, over the land in which she thus labours among all classes, civil rulers are bound in duty to Christ to own, by legal enactment, the entire and exclusive power which He has given to her, to regulate her own spiritual affairs. Civil rulers are bound thus to throw up a wall of defence around the church's jurisdiction, and so prevent themselves or their courts from being tempted to interfere with it. This is needful to her safe and prosperous action within her own spiritual sphere, so that she may do the will of her Head, and bring down His blessing.

(5.) In whatever religious work civil rulers have to engage (and we have already shown how many acts of a religious nature they are inevitably required to perform), they are bound to have that work done with the help of the churches of Christ. That is to say, in the offering of prayer in their courts—in keeping up among their people that reverence for oaths which will make them a safeguard of justice, not a mere covert of wickedness, a snare and a curse—in providing for acts of national humiliation and thanksgiving—in facilitating the religious as well as securing the secular education of the young—in favouring the introduction of christianity into heathen countries under their sway—in providing means of religious instruction and worship for soldiers and sailors, for criminals and paupers—and, in short, in all those departments of religious works with which civil government is unavoidably connected, it is the duty of civil rulers to perform their duty, as much as may be, through the instrumentality of the churches of Christ, or of those who fill the office of the ministry in them.

(6.) Still further as regards the ministrations of religion in all the congregations of all the true churches of Christ

in a land, civil rulers are bound to take an active interest in countenancing and upholding their ministrations.

The grounds of this statement are that these ministrations, more than anything else, affect the honour and involve the blessing of our great Sovereign, Christ, who rules the nations as their Governor, while He rules the churches as King in Zion. Nor is there any difficulty in pointing out the ways in which, practically, civil rulers may countenance and uphold the ministrations of religion, in all true churches in the land.

First, As opportunity occurs, they may as national rulers give their presence in the meetings of faithful churches for worship or for government, and signify their estimate of the value of the christian services thus rendered.

Second, By counselling the churches to do their duty to Christ, to His truth, and to His kingdom, civil rulers may both stimulate and encourage the members of churches to contribute their time, their energies, and their means, to provide for upholding and extending the ministrations of true religion at home and abroad.¹

Third, In token of their sympathy with the work that is being done by the churches of Christ, and also of the homage which is due from them as civil rulers, to Him who is Head over all things to the church, they may contribute material aid, in such directions, in such degrees, at such times, and in such ways, as shall be a supply where necessity requires it, and stimulate instead of superseding, the zeal and liberality of the churches in the discharge of their duty.²

Whatever an irreverent flippancy, or the straits or prejudices of party may say, inculcations of this duty of civil rulers stare upon us from the pages of the word of Christ. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring pre-

¹ Ezra i. 1, &c.

² Ezra i. 1, &c.; vi. 1, &c.

sents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts." ¹
"Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers." ² "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee . . . thy gates shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought . . . thou shalt suck the breast of kings." ³
"The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it . . . And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it." ⁴

As all the followers of Christ are plainly required by His word to contribute according to their ability for the advancement of His truth and kingdom in the world, not less plainly does the word of Christ require of civil rulers, in their place and measure, to afford material aid to the same great objects. Even though the liberality of the members of the church is the great means by which the church is to accomplish her work on earth, and though the aid of rulers is to be very much exceptional, occasional, subsidiary, and supplemental, still both are required by the word of Christ, and when rightly arranged, are beautifully fitted to work in unison for the realisation of that blessed era, when great voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign upon the earth."

II. The false relations which national rulers are to avoid.

1. Conspicuous among these are the three false relations which popery insists on establishing between earthly rulers and what it dares blasphemously to call the truth and kingdom of Christ.

(1.) The popish church demands of rulers that they own

¹ Ps. lxxii.

² Isa. xlix.

³ Isa. lx.

⁴ Rev. xxi.

her as the only church of Christ, and that they own the pope as the vicar of Christ, and as the head of His church on earth. By Christ's word to rulers, they are bound to reject that claim with abhorrence. They are bound to treat the head of the Romish system as the man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God; whom, therefore, the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming.¹

(2.) The claim of the head of the popish church to be as such a temporal sovereign of an earthly kingdom, in the midst of other temporal kings and kingdoms, is another of those false claims which the word of Christ binds rulers utterly to reject, as at once, in direct opposition to the word of Christ to them, that His kingdom is not of this world, and as at the same time a claim which is alike offensive and threatening to the kingdoms of earth, considering the power, both temporal and spiritual, which the Romish church asserts, as of divine right, in and over all nations.

(3.) The same antichristian church also claims a temporal jurisdiction over all earthly kingdoms, which civil rulers are not less bound to resist to the uttermost. Through many ages, alas! the nations of Europe submitted to this claim, and gave their strength and power to the beast.² They committed fornication with this mother of harlots, by denying Christ's truth and kingdom, and by seeking her fellowship and serving her ends. They have therefore been left to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the wrath due to her and them for their unfaithfulness to

¹ 2 Thess. ii.

² Rev. xvii.

Christ, until they have staggered, or are still staggering, to their final fall and utter ruin. The only nations which have prospered are those which have rejected these and other impious claims of popery. And the voice of Christ, in His word and in His providence, is loudly proclaiming to rulers that all the interests of society demand the speedy and utter annihilation of all these impious claims.

In fact, with the word of Christ to guide them, civil rulers are bound to deal with the Romish church, as the greatest enemy on earth of all the interests which it is their duty to protect, foster, and advance, as the enemy of Christ, the enemy of His truth, the enemy of His sabbath, the enemy of man's salvation, the enemy of the rights and liberties of all christian churches, the enemy of the sound education of the young, the enemy of conscience, the enemy of human freedom, the enemy of all human progress, the greatest enemy of all worldly states and kingdoms, as well as of that kingdom which is not of this world. If civil rulers require to give this system standing-room within the land, they cannot be of the truth and hear the voice of Christ, without at the same time perceiving and remembering that they are tolerating the presence of an enemy that will try, in return for the shelter received, to crush the very national liberty of which it is permitted to take advantage. To attempt bribing into quietness and loyalty such a system, is as wicked, and will be found as foolish, as it would be to attempt bribing the wicked one himself to let truth prevail and virtue flourish. And the rulers are neither wisely patriotic nor faithful christian rulers who fail to watch this system with a jealous eye, and resolutely to keep it in check, until the truth, the grace, and the power of Christ accomplish its destruction, and the churches and nations are at length enabled to breathe freely by being delivered from its presence.

2. Various false relations of church and state in Protestant countries.

(1.) The Erastian relation which places the church of Christ in her spiritual actings under civil control, is one of these false relations which rulers are bound by Christ's word to avoid.

They are forbidden to rule His kingdom, and to control it within its own spiritual province by their laws and power. He has appointed within it a government, in the hands of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. When civil rulers interfere with that government they set at nought His will and honour, take away the rights and liberties of the office-bearers and members of His church, destroy the integrity of His kingdom, and deal with it as with a conquered and subject kingdom of this world.

No aid nationally given to the church will for a moment justify the assertion and exercise of such a civil supremacy in and over her. The only proper and an abundant return for any such aid, is the church's unfettered performance of christian service.

All questions of christian truth and discipline within the church can be lawfully dealt with and determined, only by those church officers distinct from the civil magistrate, in whose hands alone Christ has placed the government of His church.

It is more than time that the rulers of this land were awaking to the evil nature and disastrous results of that state-supremacy over the church of Christ which they have so long claimed and wielded. It is high time that they were learning to regard the kingdom of Christ in all its sections, as by His will, the freest of all kingdoms on this earth. It is more than time that they were allowing it to assert, maintain, and improve its free action and heavenly character, as the only condition on which it can honour Him, and

be used by Him to dispense unspeakable and endless blessings to the nations of the world.

(2.) Closely connected with, and indeed naturally resulting from, the Erastian connection just mentioned, is another false relation of civil rulers to religion and the church, viz., that of indiscriminate support of all religious systems, true and false, that prevail and have decided power in the land.

According to the fundamental principle of that relation, civil rulers have no call or competency to distinguish between truth and error; little or no distinction is to be made between one religious system and another; it is not, indeed, so much as a system of religion at all, but rather as a political power in the country, that each is to be subsidised by the State.

But this is just to have the devil's lie placed on the same level with the truth as it is in Jesus, and to have the synagogue of Satan placed side by side with the church of the living God. It is an attempt to bring righteousness into fellowship with unrighteousness, light into communion with darkness, Christ into concord with Belial, the temple of God into agreement with idols.

This is a popular policy with too many statesmen at present, if they only knew how to carry it out. But as the penalty due to it for the dishonour which it offers to the Lord Jesus, to His truth and kingdom, overwhelming judgments are evidently about to be sent by Christ on all institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, that are based and are trying to build themselves up on such a foundation.

Parties who widely differ as to the right relation of rulers to religion and the church will unite, though from different motives, designs, and hopes, in hurling such a system of things into destruction, or in permitting it, unhelped, to be overtaken by its deserved doom.

And all Christ's true servants are solemnly called to prepare for terminating their connection with such a system, by forming or filling up more faithful sections of the kingdom of Christ on earth.

(3.) There is a false relation of favouritism which civil rulers are bound to avoid. It is not their duty to select one or two of the churches of Christ in a land, and to favour them at the expense of others. By a reprehensible and ruinous policy, rulers may slide into this position. But it is an improper one, out of which the sooner they get, the better both for religion and the land.

The churches of Christ ought to be treated by the state with even-handed justice, and to experience alike, so far as they will allow themselves to experience, the effects of state-homage to the truth, as forming together the kingdom of Christ in the land. For it is the truth which the nation is to further wherever it is found. It is the voice of Christ which the nation is to hear and to reverence, through whatever section of the church His voice is speaking. It is the kingdom of Christ which the nation is to uphold and advance, in whatever sections of it that kingdom is presented before their eyes. And the truth, the voice, and the kingdom of Christ, are to be recognised by the nation and its rulers, in connection with all the branches of the church in which He reveals His truth, utters His voice, and exhibits His kingdom.

(4.) There is a relation of over-assistance to the church which the rulers of a land are required, by the voice of Christ in His word, to avoid. It is not the duty of civil rulers to provide to such an extent the means required for the maintenance and extension of the church of Christ, as to supersede the private and personal givings of the members.

That arrangement, when it exists, sets aside a law of

Christ which requires these givings; and it stifles the spirit from which they should flow.

Moreover, in stifling that spirit, the general tone of religion and morality becomes correspondingly depressed.

Other mischiefs follow when this overdone state patronage is bestowed on particular sections of the church. The stipendiaries so over-fed, assume airs of haughtiness in the presence of brethren who are often more worthy of honour. The leaven of worldliness eats the life out of such stipendiaries. Many of the people, too, become attached to the ministry of such stipendiaries, however unfaithful, just because it does not directly cost them anything, while they are far too callous to care about where that ministry is leading them. And thus the highest interests are sacrificed by such overdone state patronage.

The word of Christ affords no warrant for such state provision for the christian ministry as would supersede the free-will offerings of the people; and that word affords just as little warrant for such a provision in favour of certain sections of the ministry, in contradistinction from and at the expense of other sections, not less, probably more faithful. And the sooner such disorders give way to those arrangements which are in better accordance with Scripture, reason, justice, and common sense, the better will it be for the truth and the kingdom of Christ, as well as for the kingdoms of this world which are concerned.

3. There is a relation of official neutrality on the part of civil rulers to the truth and kingdom of Christ for which many in the present day contend, but which is, we believe, as truly contrary to the word of Christ as are the other false relations which we have mentioned.

(1.) They are against all legislation in favour of true religion as well as of that which is false. The advocates of this neutrality may indeed hold that civil rulers ought to

be personally christian, ought to go to their official work as rulers in a christian spirit. At the same time, they not less strenuously insist that legislation ought to make or recognise no distinction between truth and error in religion. They insist that the laws which civil rulers make and administer, ought to have no more religion in them than is found in the hats, and shoes, and hosiery, and other products of ordinary tradesmen. But,—

FIRST. It is an untenable foundation on which to erect that theory to tell us that the only end, immediate or ultimate, of the magistrate's office is the temporal welfare of society. For, *first*, it is an unfounded assumption to say of any human agency whatever, that absolutely the only end which it is intended and ought to be employed to serve is one of a merely temporal and perishable nature. Whatever immediate formal end certain kinds of human agency may be appointed to serve, there is not one of them that has not for its ultimate and higher end, results that reach, and ought to be realised as reaching, through eternity. *Second*, Even while the civil magistrate is to contemplate, as the immediate formal end of his government, the temporal welfare of society, he is bound as a reasonable, and still more as a christian man, to take the best, the cheapest, the easiest, and the surest way of accomplishing that end. And as godliness has the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come, the civil magistrate, as having charge of the life that now is, is officially bound actively to foster that godliness by which, more than by all other means within his reach, this, the immediate formal end of his office, may be attained. *Third*, As we have already said, while the temporal well-being of society is the immediate formal end of the magistrate's office, it is not the actual ultimate principal end of his office, or of any office

in this world. In all departments of human agency, men are bound to have regard to the glory of God, and their own and each other's future and eternal destiny. And therefore, both with a view to the immediate formal end of his government, which is the public good, and with a view also to the ultimate, and infinitely the most important, results of all human agency, the civil magistrate is bound to recognise, and to act under the acknowledgment of, the relation in which he and his government, and those that are under it, occupy to God and His word, to Christ and His truth and kingdom.

SECOND. We are told, indeed, by advocates of this neutrality on the part of the civil magistrate, that he is nowhere represented in Scripture as armed with the sword of office for the advancement of godliness; and painful pictures are drawn of the violence to conscience and to truth that result from drawing his sword in such a cause. But they do violence to truth who thus speak. For they speak of the civil magistrate as if his whole work consisted in brandishing his sword in the face of his subjects. There are, we think, sounder, more rational, more scriptural views of the magistrate's office. The Bible says, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even as a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." That description does not tally with the doctrine that he can officially do nothing but brandish his sword of office, and resort to compulsion, or to physical force. The civil magistrate is also described as "the minister of God" to His people "for good;" and that description implies that the more he uses all possible moral influence, and the less he resorts to coercive power, the more effectually will he accomplish the work and ends of his office, and prove a

blessing to those over whom he is placed. Moreover, while "a terror to evil-doers," and armed for that purpose with the sword, he is also to be "a praise to them that do well;" and that language, too, looks like an intimation that he is to do more than merely protect true christians and true churches; that he is, in fact, to treat them with special favour as the very salt of society.

THIRD. It is said that such distinction officially made by the civil magistrate in favour of true christians and true churches, and in favour of the truth, is civil injustice to those who hold by what is reckoned vital error in religion. But to affirm that the civil magistrate who, with general consent, affords countenance and support to the truth and kingdom of Christ in the land, acts unjustly by those who are opposed to the arrangement, is to affirm that men are wronged by having to live in a land in which, according to the prevailing christian convictions, the best means are being effectually used and divinely blessed for advancing the highest interests, for time and for eternity, of the great bulk and body of the people.

FOURTH. It is said, however, that the truth and kingdom of Christ are things too sacred to be honoured and helped by the declarations and actions of civil rulers in their favour. But the cause of Christ is not too sacred to receive the homage of every power and agency that has a right to exist and operate on this earth. On the contrary, His cause is placed and upheld on this earth for the very purpose of receiving this homage, or of proving the destruction of all powers and agencies that refuse it. The truth and kingdom of Christ are placed and maintained by Him in the world, that they may subdue, regenerate, sanctify, and control every agency, great and small, till holiness to the Lord is written, not only on civil government, but on all the myriads of smaller powers and agencies, down

to the very bells of the horses, and Christ is indeed "ALL and in all."

FIFTH. We are told again that all direct, formal, distinguishing connection between the civil powers and Christ's truth and kingdom ought to be avoided, because every such connection is unavoidably and invariably corrupting to the truth, and injurious to the prevalence of true religion. But this reasoning, if it proves anything, proves a great deal too much. For see where it lands us. Religion is always corrupted by contact with depraved men, therefore all such contact ought to be avoided. The church is always corrupted by temporal power, riches, and honour; therefore she ought to be kept in weakness, poverty, and disgrace. The kingdom of Christ must always suffer from its connection with this fallen world; therefore it ought not to be in it. Surely to state is to prove the opposite argument, viz., that as the corruption which fills the kingdoms of this world can be restrained and removed only by the penetrating and purifying power of true religion, therefore the more thoroughly the kingdoms of this world are pervaded by its power, the better will it be for them, and the more effectually will the ends of religion and of the church be accomplished on the earth. Civil rulers, with the word of Christ to guide them, are bound to know this fact, and to foster accordingly within the land both true religion and all true churches of the living God.

SIXTH. It is also argued that religion and the church do not need state-recognition to enable them to live and to thrive. The answer is varied and complete. Religion and the church do not need to be free from persecution, for they often thrive best in the fiery furnace; but that is no reason why they should not desire and benefit by outward rest and other outward advantages. Moreover, whatever they need or can do without, nations and rulers need them,

need their presence and help to make the land safe and prosperous. And though Christ does not need the help of civil rulers to His truth and kingdom, they need His presence and blessing, and, in order to that, they need to own Him as their ruler and disposer, they need to own His word of truth, they need to offer their homage at His feet, they need, for their own sake, to secure the influence, and to further the prevalence and the power of His truth and kingdom in the land.

SEVENTH. Notwithstanding these, as they appear to us, manifest truths, the advocates of the neutrality of the civil powers in reference to the truth and kingdom of Christ, still insist that the best thing civil rulers can do for true religion and true churches, is officially to let them alone; to protect them indeed from violence, and give them free scope; but beyond that protection, to be officially passive in their presence, neither hindering them on the one hand, nor, on the other hand, helping them with any positive aid.

But, *first*, this doctrine is opposed to the obligations which are involved in the fact that Christ is Head over nations as well as Head of His church. For that fact carries with it this consequence, that civil government and the church are both in His hands, and ought, while they exist side by side, to be positively and actively helpful to each other.

Moreover, *second*, the doctrine which we are combating, seems opposed to all the irresistible necessities of the case. For, were it true that no natural, necessary, actual, formal, and positive connection was to be established between Christ's kingdom and those worldly kingdoms in the midst of which it exists and prevails, then this extraordinary and impossible state of things might arise in a land, viz., that Christ's kingdom could be set up and advanced in it, till its spiritual divine power transformed the entire character of

both rulers and people, and yet the laws and institutions, and whole government of the land, as to the letter and the form of them, remained the same as before. But the idea is preposterous. The kingdom of Christ cannot prevail in a land without revolutionising not only the character of rulers and ruled, but the laws, the government, and the whole social institutions, habits, and condition of the people, and even the very face of the land itself. That very Roman empire, in the interest of which Pilate, at the time here referred to, questioned Jesus, was speedily to be in a marked degree so revolutionised by the very truth to which Jesus refers, that He could not possibly mean, by what He said, that His kingdom would not, by its advancement, seriously affect that empire, or that its rulers were under no official obligation to own Him, and to further His truth, and to assist in setting up His kingdom. All that Jesus could possibly mean was, that He was not to set up any rival temporal power, but that the power which He was to establish, would operate only to bless the civil governments which it found existing, and which welcomed its presence and submitted to its influence; and that it would bless them by purifying and elevating them, and so giving to them at once a more healthful and a more enduring character.

Now, while the moral and spiritual forces of the kingdom of Christ are thus telling on the whole condition of worldly kingdoms, unless some positive command has come forth from on high, which binds them to passiveness in its presence, it is neither possible nor proper for the kingdoms of this world to let the kingdom of Christ alone, to let it remain unnoticed or unacknowledged in their laws and their administration. Such mighty forces, such a divinely revolutionary power at active and decisive work within their borders, cannot but require as well as compel them to deal

with it. It is not reasonable to say that national rulers are able or at liberty to allow such spiritual omnipotent forces of the kingdom of Christ to operate in the land, and entirely to revolutionise both them and the people, without giving to that kingdom of Christ any official recognition and countenance. They could not, in fact, avoid legislating for or against it. The attempt, moreover, to be neutral toward it, or to give the same legislative and administrative treatment to it and to its opposites, would be to act as its adversaries. For, not to be with Christ, not to be for His truth and kingdom, directly and decidedly, actively and avowedly, is, on the part of any agency and power whatsoever, to be really against Him.

And, *third*, This advocated neutrality of rulers towards the kingdom of Christ, gets no countenance from His words to Pilate. "He that is of the truth heareth my voice." All, in every condition, and as respects the real and avowed purpose of all their actings, if true, not false, to themselves and to others, to Christ and to God, offer the homage of their hearts and lives to Christ, as King over all; King over all in all conditions, and through all time. These words mean that, if they mean anything. So that, according to their just and only tenable interpretation, all departments of human agency, governmental or otherwise, are in reality a lie and a delusion, except they are purposely and formally subject to Christ, and positively and actively subservient to the interests of His truth and kingdom. It cannot be that, according to these words, the laws and official actings of civil rulers are to make no difference between religious truth and religious error, between true churches of Christ, true sections of His kingdom, and other societies, that may take the name of His church and kingdom, while they deny or set aside His truth; are to treat such true and such false churches with the same favour or the same indifference, or

the same neutrality, and to afford exactly the same help to each to spread truth and falsehood respectively throughout the land.

EIGHTH. All direct active helpful relations of civil rulers to the truth and kingdom of Christ, is opposed on the ground that civil rulers are not only not required, but are incompetent, and even forbidden, to declare officially what is true and what is false in religion. Of course, that really means that the laws of a land are not to exhibit or contain any distinction between truth and error in religion, are not to offer any direct homage to the word of God as His word, are to offer no direct homage to Christ, are to pay no peculiar respect to His churches, as distinct from all other societies, ecclesiastical or civil. Well, this doctrine certainly looks like that of Pilate when he said "What is truth?" Pilate evidently held that he knew of no set of sentiments to which the word "truth" could be exclusively or really applied, and that, at all events, as a ruler he could and would take no cognisance of any doctrines whatever, as entitled to have the term "truth" applied to them. And, further, the opinion which we are now dealing with, does look like a contradiction of the words of Jesus, when He said, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." For these words certainly seem to mean, if they mean anything, that all men, in all conditions, and in all their words and actions, are true to Christ, true to their neighbours and themselves, and true to their own and one another's interests for time and eternity, only in so far as their actings embody the truth to which He came into the world to bear witness.

NINTH. Amidst the various windings taken by the opinion which we are now endeavouring to bring forth to view, and to present in the clear light of truth, we may notice one other turn which it takes, and by which it twists itself

round the imaginations and passions of many, and then holds them fast by one of the strongest prejudices. The advocates of official neutrality on the part of civil rulers, in the conflicts going on between truth and error in religion, are accustomed to argue, that civil rulers could not legislate at all in favour of the truth, without employing such coercion in its favour as is contrary to the spirit and enactments of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. That means that formal legislation, in every shape and form, in favour of true religion, involves the offering of violence to the consciences of men, and to the right of private judgment. But this averment is surely an abuse of words, and the raising up of a bugbear.

All legislation, indeed, in favour of the truth and kingdom of Christ that sought to compel men to believe these doctrines which the laws set forth as truth, by subjecting those who differed from these doctrines to penalties from which such as received them were freed,—all that sort of legislation would be chargeable with the coercion of conscience, and is therefore to be utterly abhorred. To employ such coercion, under the professed design of securing regard to the truth and kingdom of Christ, is to frustrate the very end for which it is professedly employed. For the professed end is to recommend the truth and to glorify Christ, by making men good citizens, as the result of encouraging them to become true christians. An end like that cannot possibly be accomplished by attempting to compel men to believe in Christ, or by compelling them to profess their faith in Him.

But to say that civil rulers cannot officially and legislatively set forth the claims of Christ, of His truth and kingdom, to universal acceptance, without resorting to such compulsion, is to contradict reason and observation, as well as scripture. To say that civil government cannot use its

moral influence alone, for any purpose, is to shut our eyes to as plain a fact as that the sun shines. Even in political matters, it often uses its mere moral influence with nations abroad, and with its people at home, to secure the adoption of sound principles and courses of action, in cases in which it has and claims no power to enforce its counsels. And surely what civil government does even in political matters, it can do in reference to those higher truths and interests in which it is bound to take the deepest concern.

If a national testimony on behalf of peace throughout the world, as against the guilty designs of the nations that are arming for war, if such a testimony can be nobly borne by a nation like this, and that when no power is claimed or to be exercised to enforce it, on what ground can it be denied, that a national testimony in favour of the truth and kingdom of Christ may be borne, without exercising or claiming any power or right physically to enforce that testimony. That witness-bearing to the truth, which is the echo of Christ's own witness-bearing, may come from a thousand as well as from one, and from millions as well as from thousands, and from the collective body of a people as well as from them individually, and from their rulers and their laws as well as from themselves.

Nor is the value of such a national testimony to be overlooked. For if God has appointed those who receive the truth to be His witnesses for it on the earth, and if He has promised to use and bless that testimony as a means of its maintenance and advancement, a national testimony to it is one of the likeliest ways of giving it sway and power over the land, and throughout the world.

But a national testimony like that involves a legal acknowledgment of the truth and kingdom of Christ, such as alone can distinguish them from every other system of opinion, and every other kind of organisation, political or

ecclesiastical, and so become a security to the churches, that, in prosecuting their work of spreading the truth as it is in Jesus, by their teaching and their discipline, they shall be safe from all intrusive and coercive interference on the part of the civil power.

(2.) I have now to mention one particular kind of neutrality in the relation of the civil magistrate to religion and the church, which is insisted on with special emphasis, viz., that which regards the withholding of all state aid for the maintenance and extension of the truth and kingdom of Christ. The advocates of neutrality, while opposed to all legislation in regard to what is true or false in religion, are if possible still more opposed to the doctrine that the civil magistrate may give, and as occasion permits and requires, ought to give, material aid, in a greater or less degree, to the maintenance and advancement of true religion.

But, FIRST, civil rulers are not precluded by any general principle or rule of scripture from giving material aid to Christ's truth and kingdom. *When* they are to give it indeed, to what *extent* they are to give it, and *to whom* they shall give it, are questions to be decided according to circumstances. But there is no principle of reason or rule of scripture prohibiting it altogether.

SECOND.—'Tis said, indeed, that to give such aid even to true religion in a land, if there be some in that land who dissent from the religion aided, and from the aid given, is to "violate political justice." This is to say that the rulers and people of a nation must, as such, avoid making any profession, and abstain from giving any practical proof of their national relation and responsibility to the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Governor among the nations, if a few are not satisfied that the thing is rightly done, or if a few are of opinion that the thing should not be done at all.

THIRD.—We hear again occasionally of “fiscal” responsibility, as entitling and even requiring of civil rulers, whenever they assist christian services, to direct and control authoritatively the services so assisted, in order that they may have due control over the means applied for such a purpose; as if civil rulers had not sufficient control over their own resources, in being able and bound, at any moment, to withdraw them, when they ceased to reckon the services worthy of their aid.

FOURTH.—It is said, however, to be contrary to the nature, the genius, and the spirit of christianity, that civil rulers should aid materially in its advancement. But true religion has been essentially of the same nature from the beginning of the world. And if assistance was given to it, with divine approbation, not only by Jewish rulers, but by Gentile monarchs, in ancient times, such assistance was not opposed to the nature of true religion then, and cannot be opposed to it now. Besides, the promises of this very aid in these last days is given in the prophetic scriptures in the most glowing colours, as one of the most prominent attendants and aids of the advancement of true religion to its approaching triumphs on the earth.

FIFTH.—As a still bolder ground of opposition to all material aid on the part of civil rulers to the truth and kingdom of Christ, it is said that all such aid is precluded by, and contrary to, the law of free-will offerings, which Christ Himself has given as His sole ordinance for the maintenance and extension of His kingdom. But the resources for religious purposes now under government control were, to a greater or less extent, the free-will offerings of our ancestors, and as such, according to the very principle contended for, ought to go to the objects for which they were freely given. Further, if at any time general unanimity in regard to religion and its claims takes possession

of the national mind, public contributions to the cause of Christ, in accordance with the national sentiment, become as truly free-will offerings as any others.

The particular notion pleaded for however is, that more direct dependence for their maintenance by those who give religious instruction on those who receive it, is *the* ordinance of Christ. And the two passages chiefly resorted to, as furnishing proof of this doctrine, are in 1 Cor. ix. and Gal. vi.

In 1 Cor. ix. it is written, "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? . . . Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Now what other lessons than the following are to be gathered from these words? *First*, Ministers of the gospel are entitled to maintenance as such, without having to support themselves by any other calling, as soldiers, planters of vineyards, shepherds, and Jewish priests lived, or live, by their occupations. *Second*, There is not, at the same time, a word to fix down the precise source and way of their maintenance. *Third*, On the contrary, as the illustrative cases are cases partly of national support and partly of private provision, the natural inference is that either way may be held available. While, *Fourth*, The fact that Paul, even when ministering to one of the wealthiest of the churches, refused to depend on its liberality, and lived by following the worldly occupation which he had learned, conclusively proves that neither mode of maintenance is absolutely required by the gospel; that the right of ministers to a maintenance as such is the only thing here set forth, while the whole question

of how that maintenance is in every case to be obtained is left undecided.

The passage in Gal. vi. is still more frequently and emphatically urged as shutting up the church to dependence on direct christian liberality, and to the refusing of all state aid for the ministrations of religion. The words are, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." These words are held to lay down, as the law of Christ, that the ministers of the gospel are to depend for their maintenance only on those who are instructed by them, and to exclude all state aid for such a purpose, as contrary to this law.

But this literal, limited, stringent interpretation of the words carries consequences for which the authors of the interpretation are not prepared. For, *First*, according to it the passage should run, Let only him that is taught in the word, and no other party, and let every one who is taught in the word, whether rich or poor, whether able or unable, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. *Second*, If this law, as thus interpreted, is to be kept and not broken, ministers must not follow the example of the very apostle who uttered the words, for he would not allow the wealthy church of Corinth, while he taught them, to communicate to him at all in any good thing, but supported himself by his own labour. *Third*, Nor according to this interpretation can ministers take any help from property given by donors who are or were beyond the pale of the church, or perhaps even from central sustentation aid funds within the church itself, since even such provisions come between the teacher and his direct dependence on those that are taught by him. *Fourth*, It will not avail to say that the words confine the sources of supply to those that are within the same church with the minister to be provided for, or to those within the church on earth, and to such of

them as are able. This is a way of free and easy interpretation at one time, and of strict, literal, narrow interpretation at another time, that cannot be admitted. And even though it were, it would not suit the object in view, for it would cover the actings of the state proceedings in support of religion, when those who adopt them are by profession within the visible church of Christ. *Fifth*, This interpretation can thus be clung to only by its advocates involving themselves in all manner of absurdities and contradictions. *Sixth*, It is surely attaching a more natural meaning to the words, to explain them as enjoining on all who receive christian instruction, and profit by it, to contribute as they are able, and as circumstances permit and require, for the maintenance of those who are employed in imparting it; while, at the same time, ministers are not confined to this kind of support, since Paul, who uttered the words, himself refused it, but may rely on resources that lie outside of the people's offerings, and even outside of the church, since Paul did so, in living on the labour of his own hands.

In making these observations, it is the furthest thing possible from my mind to sink out of sight, or even to bring down to a level with public aid to Christ's cause, the free-will offerings of the people; for I believe as firmly as any living man that the constant and increasing oblations of the faithful are to be the great means of maintaining ordinances in the land, and of spreading the gospel from pole to pole. But I think it of deep importance to allow no channels of aid to be choked up through which the Lord's cause may get what is due to it, and He may get His glory. On these grounds I thus argue, that there is no proof furnished by the word of Christ that nations and their rulers are shut out from uniting their aid with all other efforts for spreading the truth and kingdom of Christ on earth.

Before leaving this part of the subject, I may notice how in this matter, as in many others, extremes meet. Advocates of indiscriminate state support to all religions, and advocates of the refusal of all state support to any, agree in this, that all religions should be placed on the same level in the eye of the law, the only difference between them being the height of the level to be occupied by them all alike. Neither of these doctrines seems to be that inculcated on Pilate when Jesus said, "For this purpose came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth: he that is of the truth heareth my voice." They both seem more allied to Pilate's answer, "What is truth?" as if he, as a civil ruler, could and would make no distinction between them.

It is to be hoped few faithful servants of Christ will be found anywhere in any of the churches vindicating the policy of statesmen in patronising all religions alike, and especially courting those which are most unscrupulous, intriguing, and dangerous; and that the time is at hand when, as unspeakably the least of two evils, the demand will be made to cease from giving to any, such support as is now given to some, rather than that it should be more and more extended to all.

But 'tis, I think, not less to be resolved, that civil rulers shall not be permitted unopposed to make no distinction in law, and in such countenance and exceptional aid as circumstances still permit and require, between Christ's truth and the devil's lie. As a principle, this absolute neutrality of civil rulers is as indefensible as their policy of indiscriminate patronage of truth and error. Carry out this principle of neutrality, and rulers have no more right to appropriate the time of the people, which is to them the same as money, than the money itself, and so have no more right to interfere with the people's use of their time on

sabbath, than with their use of it on the other six days of the week. In fact, on this principle, there could be no use made of the nation's time or the nation's means, or of the official power of rulers to do homage to Christ. That is, their Governor could have no national homage offered to His sovereignty. This principle, therefore, carried out, would eliminate from the constitution of the country all those divine elements which give it its virtue and its strength.

If, therefore, it is high time to bring to an end the indiscriminate support of truth and error, it is not less high time that the nonconformists of Britain were regaining a little more of the principles and spirit of their Puritan ancestors, and adjusting their sentiments in greater accordance with divine truth, and with enlightened reason, so as to be prepared to stand for Christ's will and honour against all levellers, of whatever class. And, at all events, there is a loud call to us, not to leave that sacred ground, on which the Lord has given us grace to fight so many battles, and win so many victories.

The principle contended for in this discourse keeps clear on the one hand of the national corruption and abuse to which christianity has been subjected, and, on the other hand, of the national atheism in which our country is in danger of being engulfed. The persistent defence of established churches in their present position and corrupted state, will ensure and justly ensure their overthrow. On the other hand, the most popular arguments employed at present against them, if carried out in the legislation of the country, will as completely separate all national law and action from religion, as if civil government had nothing to do with God, and God had nothing to do with civil government. The church that formally adopts and pursues a policy of which that separation is the natural and necessary

result, is damaging or destroying her character and her claims as representing the reformed church of our fathers. As this question advances to its crisis, it is to be hoped that the slumbering grand old instincts divinely inlaid in our people, will yet awake under the merciful hand of God upon them, and save our character and perpetuate our position among the churches and nations of the earth.

III. The obligation lying on us to bear our testimony to the relation in which nations and their rulers are thus placed by Christ to Himself, to His truth, and to His kingdom.

He Himself bore witness to this relation on the occasion before us. He bare witness to it before a Roman governor. He would have borne the same witness before that governor's master, the Roman emperor, and before all the potentates of earth. To them all, therefore, that testimony is addressed by Christ, and His church is appointed to convey it.

It is worthy of special notice that the very witness-bearing of Jesus, on this occasion, is set before Timothy as an example for him to follow. "Thou hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in His times He shall show, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords."¹ The same example of Jesus is a rule and motive of conduct for us all.

Accordingly, it is also worthy of notice that, throughout the scriptures, whatever is said of the progress of the

¹ 1 Tim. vi.

kingdom of Christ, connects that kingdom with His supremacy over all things, as well as with His headship over the church.

Thus when David, his princes, and his people contributed so largely for the building of the temple, they did so expressly as their homage to HIM who is "HEAD ABOVE ALL," from whom all blessings flow, and by whose grace they were made thus willing to give Him of His own.¹

When the second temple was erecting, and the people fainted at their inadequate resources, and at the prospect of an edifice so inferior to the first, they were told, as an inducement to proceed, that the LORD OF HOSTS was coming to "shake the heavens and the earth," that is, the "ecclesiastical and civil powers," and that, while His servants owned Him in that character, He would furnish them with enough of the silver and gold, which are His, for setting up "the kingdom that cannot be moved."²

It is in His character of "HEAD OVER ALL THINGS to the church," that He is "perfecting" His people as His own body, by filling them with His fulness.³ From Him, as ascended far ABOVE ALL THINGS, and FILLING ALL THINGS, are the gifts, needful for that purpose, bestowed upon His church.⁴ It is in His character of "the first begotten of the dead," and "the Prince of the kings of the earth," that He is redeeming by His power all whom He bought with His blood.⁵ While it is with the life that flows into their souls from Christ their Head, that His servants are prepared to execute His commission to teach all nations, it is under His protection, as He to whom "all power is given in heaven and in earth,"⁶ that His servants are to "go into all the world" for that purpose; and it is therefore vain for

¹ 1 Chron. xxix.

² Eph. i.

³ Rev. i.

² Hag. ii., Heb. xii.

⁴ Eph. iv.

⁶ Matt. xxviii.

them to think that they will find due heed given by sinners to His message, or a blessing from Himself upon it, if they do not testify to them the claims of their Protector, as Governor among the nations and King of kings, as well as of His grace as Saviour of the lost. And when He comes at length, as come He will, to accomplish the destruction of all the powers and agencies of earth that are opposing Him, and to accomplish also the salvation of a now ransomed world, besides revealing Himself by the name of the "FAITHFUL AND TRUE," "THE WORD OF GOD;" He will also have conspicuously written on His vesture and His thigh the names "KING of kings" and "LORD of lords;" and while He is gathering the ransomed to the "marriage supper of the Lamb," He will at the same time receive that homage of "kings" and "nations," which foreshadows the still more glorious state of the church, which is to be characterised by their bringing their glory and honour into it.¹

And so, if asked for a term summarily expressing that gospel truth which is to regenerate and bless this world, the proper reply is, "Christ all in all;" Christ the Head of every man, pouring divine life into the soul; Christ the Head of the church, giving her all her ordinances and laws, and by His gracious presence in them, proving the glory of them all; and Christ the Head of the nations, turning into hell those that forget Him, and bringing the rulers of such as are saved to offer their official homage at His feet, as rendering their government light and easy by the prevalence of His truth and kingdom throughout all their borders.

This supremacy of Christ was embodied in the national system which Knox planned, and Melville perfected, and Henderson, and Rutherford, and the other worthies of our Reformation illustrated. That system sought to provide for

¹ Rev. xix. 21.

the proper education and godly upbringing of all the children of the land, for the advancement in all human and sacred learning of the more promising of the young, for the maintenance of all the poor, for the religious instruction of the entire population, for the just administration of all human law, and for the practice of piety and virtue by all classes in the kingdom. Towards the support of religious ordinances, it arranged for the appropriation to that object of help of every kind from every quarter, including, in a marked specific way, "the continual oblations of the faithful."

The carrying out of this system, even in an imperfect manner, has been the main source of all those triumphs of civil and religious liberty, of art and science, of learning and commerce, of religion and virtue, that have marked our people, and that adorn our annals. The carrying of it out still in its spirit, and, to a great extent, in its letter, might make this nation an earnest of that approaching consummation, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign upon the earth.

The testimony to Christ's supremacy, which it has been the distinguished lot of the Scottish church and Scottish people to bear, has, from providential events, been emphatically rendered in the special form of a testimony to His supremacy over the church and over the nation in their direct relation to each other, under Himself. This, properly, was not a lot of our Reformers' choosing. It was a lot assigned to them by Christ, and assigned to them, *first*, in connection with their faithfulness to the whole truth as regards His crown and covenant; and, *second*, in connection with, and as the result of, the resistance which our civil rulers offered, early and late, to that truth. In the providence of Christ, it has thus been our peculiarly distinguished

call and privilege to proclaim the duty of rulers to His truth and kingdom.

Other churches have, equally with us—all churches, indeed, in proportion to their faithfulness—borne witness, and have suffered for their witness-bearing, to the duty which the church owes to herself and to her Lord, to preserve her own integrity, and take law from Him alone. And had that been our only duty, we could have done it, by simply and quietly leaving our state connection, and taking up our position, side by side, or at once amalgamating, with the non-established churches around.

But, with our convictions, and according to our standards and our vows, this was a course which we were not at liberty to take. We felt bound to struggle to retain our integrity, and our temporal privileges as well, and to awaken THE RULERS to a sense of their DUTY to the truth and kingdom of Christ. And even when we found our struggle hopeless, and indeed no longer practicable, and therefore, in 1843, surrendered our state establishment, we did not cease from our testimony, when we could no longer gain, but only suffer, because of it. The relations and obligations of the rulers to Christ did not cease when they would not own them; and our duty to bear witness to these relations and obligations has not ceased, because for a season rulers may be determined, and may be allowed to turn a deaf ear to it. They will not so easily get rid of their responsibilities, and neither will we of ours.

It ought not to be a light matter in our eyes, that—as the result of Christ's providential dealings with us for centuries, as a church—this truth of national obligation to Him is proclaimed in all our standards, documents, and deeds; that it was blazoned on the banner given to our suffering forefathers to display because of the truth; that it was proclaimed by these sufferers and martyrs from the hill-

sides, and from the dens and caves of our country, at the bar of human judgment, in imprisonment and exile, and from their bloody scaffolds and honoured graves; that it has made Scotland a land of sacredness, like the land of Judah itself, among the ancient kingdoms of the earth; and that we proclaimed it in connection with the state, and have, if possible, more emphatically still proclaimed it in our actings at the disruption, and in our Acts of Assembly, one after another, in the years that followed. A testimony so consecrated, we are, it is to be hoped, not to be left to abandon now. There are no good reasons for abandoning it. The reasons are very weighty for firmly maintaining it still.

The honour of Christ requires it. The rulers are breaking His bands and casting His cords from them. It is, therefore, due to His honour to proclaim that there is "given to Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom; that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him,"¹ and "that all dominions should serve and obey Him."² And we are to proclaim the truth, until He overwhelms His adversaries, and makes good His claims as "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

The safety of states and kingdoms depends on their hearing this testimony, and doing the duties which it requires at their hands. For Christ is about to speak to the kings and rulers of the earth in His wrath, and to vex them in His sore displeasure. His kingdom is about to break in pieces and consume all hostile earthly kingdoms, that it may itself stand for ever.³ Therefore as we would not remain contented and unmoved, and see them broken with a rod of iron and dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel, we are to call upon them to be wise and receive instruction, to serve the Lord with fear, and to pay their homage at His feet.

¹ Dan. vii.² Dan. vii.³ Dan. ii.

Our welfare as a church requires this testimony. When we appealed to our people to take up that cause which their rulers had rejected, and to do their own part as a people, and, so far as they could, the part of their rulers likewise, in upholding the religion of their fathers, as at once the true religion and the national religion too, and so to honour Christ as entitled to rule over Scotland, as well as in His church within the land, we were the means of awakening in their hearts the sacred memories that slumbered there, and of filling them with high and holy aims. And they have poured their offerings ever since at the feet of Jesus, and into the treasury of His church. Lower that testimony to one merely for the integrity of His church as her only King and Lord, and let her drop her testimony to the claims which Christ has to the subjection of the rulers and the nation as such to His truth and laws; and half of their heart will be taken out of our people, and then our offerings will become contracted in their object and diminished in amount, or given under the influence of less enlightened regard for His glory, and so proportionably unblest. Yea, and when no testimony is longer faithfully lifted up for the full relationship of civil government and public law to Christ, His hand will more and more cease to be upon the land for good, and be more and more stretched out to punish; and floods of error, and immorality, and pauperism, and crime, and other public calamities and miseries, will flow over and desolate the land, and submerge and sink the church herself. Whereas if we are enabled faithfully to plead for the submission of the nation to Christ, not only will He have still a redeemed and holy people amongst us, but He may yet marry to Himself the land, and render it a land of delight.¹

¹ Isa. lxi. 62.

In the cause of union, this testimony ought to be faithfully upheld, for it is the only standard under which, with the divine blessing, you can help to rally the Presbyterian population of the land. Whatever may be said to the contrary, the system of Knox, and Melville, and Henderson, and Rutherford, and Gillespie, and the Erskines, and M'Crie, and Chalmers, is in all its essential characteristics so christian, so wise, so comprehensive, so generous, so Scottish, so practical, and so practicable a system, that if spoken home to our people's hearts, it will yet though grace rouse the deepest, holiest feelings of their nature, and lead them to grasp with fresh firmness, and spread aloft, and rally under, the old sacred banner, on which, in characters as bright as ever, is to be seen inscribed, for Christ's Crown and Covenant.

Finally, be the more immediate issues of these contentings what they may, with such a form of sound words committed to our keeping as a church, and with such a testimony given to us to bear, our only safe, as well as dutiful, course is, in all our actings, not only to serve Him as the only Head of the church, but to bear witness to the homage due to Him from the nations and rulers of the earth, in the prospect of His coming to decide all controversies between Himself and His enemies, and to take to Him his strong power and reign.

XV.

WORK OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

“And when the day of Pentecost . . . But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh,” &c.—ACTS ii.

I. **C**ONSIDER the position of Christ, and of His apostles, at the time when this effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost took place.

Having died for the redemption of all that were given to Him in the everlasting covenant, He had risen again ; and having shown Himself alive by many infallible proofs, He had ascended to heaven. His followers were to see Him no more in this world, in His bodily presence, until He comes at last in glory, to raise the dead, and judge mankind. Formally clothed with all power in heaven and earth, He had begun to establish His kingdom among men, and had left His disciples behind Him to take care of its interests, and to labour for its advancement. The disciples themselves were at length beginning effectually to get quit of their carnal notions, desires, and hopes of an outward and temporal reign of the Messiah, and to have their eyes opened on the spirituality of the dispensation which Jesus had introduced, and would employ them to establish. Left behind Him in the world with such a charge, and encompassed with difficulties and dangers, they were now feeling more deeply than before, that nothing but special guidance and strength from on high could direct their minds, support their hearts, and establish the work of their hands. Yet

they were not so comfortless as might have been expected from their former state of mind. They rather had begun to feel that they were not forsaken by their Lord, and to look for such tokens of His presence and power, as would prove that in a very effectual manner He was still with them.

Various circumstances were leading them to expect, and to prepare for, a special visitation from their ascended Lord. He had again and again promised, that as the result of His bodily departure from among them, He would send the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, to dwell in them, and to abide with them for ever. For the fulfilment of this promise, they were now waiting with prayerful expectation. Further, they were now beginning more adequately to understand and realise the glory of Christ, as Head over all things to the church, and as still truly with them, though unseen, as still with them in respect of His divine presence and almighty power, and of His all-sufficiency and faithfulness, as their Redeemer and their Lord. They felt strong in Him, and in the power of His might. They also had their minds filled with altogether new views, both of this world and of the next; of the shadowy nature of things seen and temporal, and of the greatness of the things that are unseen and eternal; of the vanishing nature of the heaviest earthly trials before them, and of the enduring glory to which they now felt destined. In a special manner they were manifestly filled from above with anticipations of the coming of the Spirit, and with a readiness to receive Him. In fact, the Spirit was already in them, secretly and silently, yet strongly and irresistibly, drawing out their desires, and enlarging their expectations, and enlivening their hopes of His remarkable descent. Carnal lusts were now repressed. Earthly ambition was gone. Pride and jealousy had vanished. Guilty fear had fled. The spirit of unholy rivalry had left

them. Deep humility clothed them as with a garment. Holy love to God and to one another filled their hearts, and breathed in all their conduct. And, or "ever they were aware, their soul made them as the chariots of Aminadab," in the swiftness of their approach to the presence of the divine glory. Living faith and hope carried them near to God, conveyed them within the veil, brought them near to the eternal throne, and bound and held them fast to Christ, as one in Him, yea, one with Him, and as ready, waiting, and expecting to be filled out of His fulness.

This was the state of preparation into which the disciples were brought for the reception of the richest blessings from on high. And these blessings were not withheld. For while they were with one accord in one place, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." From that hour, the apostles clearly perceived, and boldly proclaimed, the true glory of Christ, and the spiritual nature of the salvation to be found in Him. The views of Christ and of His salvation, however, that now and henceforth filled their minds, as this chapter shows, and as we shall immediately and more particularly notice, were owing, in reality, not to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, but to the inwardly illuminating power with which He accompanied His gifts. At the same time, so remarkably did the Holy Spirit of Christ then work in their minds, and in the minds of those who crowded to hear them, that multitudes trembled and cried out under convictions of their sin and danger, and as many as three thousand were actually and savingly converted to Christ.

II. The threefold manner in which the Spirit came down on that day.

1. In His miraculous gifts. He came with "a sound" that arrested every ear and riveted every heart. He came as "a wind" denoting the spiritual life and strength with which He fills the soul. He came "suddenly" to mark His sovereignty in working when and where He pleases. He came as "a rushing, mighty wind," that "filled the house," to mark the resistless force with which He acts in and upon the subjects of His grace. And more impressively still, He rested on the disciples in the form of "cloven tongues of fire." To punish the pride and impiety of the builders of the tower at Babel, and to put an end to their designs, God confounded their language, and so scattered them; and ever since this difference of language has prevented the nations of the earth from so effectually combining for evil as they might otherwise have done. But now that the gospel was to be spread as the means of reuniting mankind in a holy bond of love to God and one another, the gift of divided tongues miraculously came on the disciples, whereby they could preach the gospel to men of all nations; and, at the same time, to symbolise the power of the Spirit as about to be put forth through the gospel, to consume the corruptions of sinners, and to kindle in their hearts the love of God, the cloven tongues that came down upon the disciples were "tongues of fire." And though that miraculous gift was given only for the time, the history of it leaves on Christ's followers the obligation to master all the languages of earth, and through them to convey His gospel to every creature under heaven. Moreover, this miraculous descent of the Spirit served to strengthen the faith of the disciples in their now adored Redeemer. It further proclaimed to the unbelieving His Deity and Messiahship, and His disciples' commission to spread His name throughout the earth.

While it served the further and more immediate purpose of arresting the attention of the multitudes from every nation under heaven, who were then in Jerusalem at the feast, and of bringing them in crowds around the apostles to listen to their words.

But it is to be carefully noticed that the bestowment of miraculous gifts was not sufficient, by itself, then or at any time, to convert those who witnessed them, or even to convert those who possessed and exercised them. Balaam through the Spirit of God in him, uttered lofty prophecies of Christ, and the church; yet Balaam lived and died a wicked man. Many who, in their day, have cast out devils, will, at the last day, be disowned by Jesus, and driven from His presence, as workers of iniquity. The sight of all the outward glories of heaven, and of all the outward horrors of hell, would not suffice to turn any sinner from the love of sin to the love of God. It was not the outward glory in which Jesus appeared to Paul, that changed him from a persecutor into a preacher of the truth. His companion saw that glory too, but seems to have risen up from beneath its prostrating power, and to have departed as ungodly as before. It was by the inward illumination of his mind and regeneration of his heart, accomplished by the Holy Spirit, that he became at that moment a new creature. Hence he afterwards refers his change, not to the outward glory revealed to him, but to the divine work wrought by the Spirit in his heart, saying, "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me," &c.¹

No outward displays of the divine power and glory will change the moral nature of sinful men. And so when the disciples returned to Jesus, gladdened by the mighty works which they had performed through His name, He said, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but

¹ Gal. i.

rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." In like manner we know from the nature of the case, as well as from other parts of Scripture, and, indeed, from the narrative contained in this chapter itself, that whatever spiritual and saving effects were wrought on that day of Pentecost in those who were concerned in the effusion of the Spirit, were accomplished not by the miraculous gifts in which He came down, but by the power which He gave over their consciences and hearts to the truth proclaimed in their hearing. This will be seen by considering the other operations of the Spirit, on the occasion recorded in this chapter. For the Spirit came down that day—

2. In His common operations. By these are meant those influences under which hearers of the gospel are so far convinced and affected, without being savingly changed. As an example of what is meant, see how Peter preached, and how his hearers were affected. After defending his brethren and himself from the charge of intoxication, he told them that, as foretold by God, the Spirit had now come—that their resistance of the Spirit would bring down the heaviest judgments—that all who truly called on the Lord would be saved—that Jesus Christ was the only Mediator, and had proved His mission by His works—that while they wickedly crucified Him, God had raised Him from the dead—that His resurrection was foretold by David—that they, His followers, had witnessed, and now proclaimed it—that the miraculous descent of the Spirit from Christ that day, proved both His resurrection and His exaltation at the right hand of power—that David had predicted this exaltation when, in Psalm cx., he said, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool"—and that it now remained for them and "all the house of Israel" to "know assuredly that God had made that same Jesus whom they had cru-

cified, both Lord and Christ." Now, this home-preaching of Peter, as we may call it, this close application of the truth was rendered effectual, by what we term the common operations of the Spirit, to the extent of greatly awakening and alarming many of the Jews. We learn this from the 37th verse, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They had such a sight of their conduct to the Lord Jesus forced upon them, as filled them for the time with terror; and, under the power of an accusing conscience, they cried out for deliverance from their danger. But, which ought to be particularly observed, though they were convinced of sin, they were not turned from it, or forgiven by God. They were filled with fear, but not humbled. They had not as yet become true penitents, true believers. As yet they were not truly brought nigh to God by Jesus Christ. This is evident from what Peter, finding them in that state, called on them to do. "Repent," said he, "and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (verse 38). Up to that point, therefore, they had not yet repented, and been forgiven, and born again: and so, had they gone no further in their sentiments and feelings, they would have continued carnally-minded and condemned, and would have perished in their sins. Yet the alarm which they felt was owing to a work of the Spirit on their minds, through the instrumentality of the word which Peter preached; for it is the Spirit that, even to that extent, thus convinceth of sin. Similar convictions and alarms are felt by many who sit under a faithfully-preached gospel, in whom, after all, these convictions and alarms at length cease, without having led to saving results. In the case of others, such convictions and alarms, through the continued operation of the Spirit

of God upon them, end in their eternal conversion from sin to God. This leads me to notice that on this day of Pentecost—

3. The Spirit came down in saving power.

To see this, observe how Peter addressed the awakened multitudes, and the final and decisive results of his address in the case of a large specified number of them. He said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." "And," as we are further told, "with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." The saving effects of these appeals in the case of many, are next specified. "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls, &c.," 41-47. As we find stated in the words that follow, their experience of salvation filled them with inexpressible thankfulness and joy. They clung to the servants of Christ, through whose ministry they found themselves thus brought nigh to God. They felt strangely drawn, and sweetly bound to one another in the bonds of mutual love, as one in Christ, and heirs together of eternal life. They constantly communed together in sanctified social intercourse; and they daily drew near to God in prayer as children of His ransomed family. And so clear were their views and so deep their feelings as to the littleness of time with all its interests, and of the greatness of eternity; and so great was their love to Jesus, and to one another for His sake, that such of them as had any worldly property shared it readily with their poorer brethren; so that "they had all things common." No discords were found among so

loving a company; for they were seen keeping together with one accord. All the springs of their happiness were in God; for "they continued daily in the temple." Mutual love prompted mutual fellowship; for they were seen "breaking bread from house to house." Even their common meals were sanctified into feasts of christian love, and joy; for "they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Nay their entire life was a life of continued thanksgiving, and of uninterrupted access unto God, as well as of singular acceptance with all around; for they were daily found "praising God, and having favour with all the people." And their consistent testimony to the truth was wonderfully blessed for the conversion of their neighbours; for "the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved."

The recorded effects of the word preached that day show the nature of the Spirit's saving work. If the three thousand then brought to salvation felt their lost condition and their need of redemption, it was because the Spirit convinced them of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. If they were truly enlightened, it was because the Spirit guided them into the truth. If they were savingly changed, it was by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. If they were set free from the bondage of sin and Satan, and the world, it was because where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. If they became obedient unto God, it was because He put His Spirit in them, and so caused them to walk in His statutes, and to keep His judgments and do them. They were filled with consolation by walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. They were filled with peace and joy in believing, and made to abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Ghost. The gospel had come to them not in word only, but in power, by coming to them in the Holy Ghost. And it was by being made to live and walk in the

Spirit that they brought forth these fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. By this work of the Spirit in their heart and life, the Lord made it manifest that He had effectually called these converts to Himself, and that it was He Himself who in a similar way continued to add to the church daily such as should be saved.

III. The outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost naturally leads us to notice the history of the work of the Spirit as a work of saving grace during the past ages of the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations on the one hand; and His work throughout the ages of the gospel dispensation.

1. The work of the Spirit during the past ages of the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations.

(1.) The Spirit was given from the beginning. By the Spirit on Noah Christ preached to the wicked before the Flood.¹ When the Spirit ceased to strive with them they perished.² God gave His good Spirit to His ancient people to instruct them,³ and to cause them to rest.⁴ And all who experienced the joy of God's salvation were upheld by His free Spirit.⁵

(2.) Still the work of the Spirit had been very limited. First, in patriarchal times only a few, like Enos, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job, are recorded as having received and exemplified the grace of the Spirit in their heart and life. Then, during the Jewish dispensation the Spirit's work was much confined to one land on earth, and even then exhibited by a comparatively limited number who were Israelites indeed.

(3.) The Spirit's power was not only limited to few, but felt even by them in a feebler degree. The person and work of Christ were but imperfectly revealed in types and

¹ 1 Pet. iii.

³ Neh. ix.

⁵ Ps. lvii.

² Gen. ix.

⁴ Isa. lxiii.

figures; and the way of salvation was but dimly seen. From the prophets was concealed much that by the Spirit in them they foretold of Christ's sufferings and consequent glory.¹ Righteous men were not permitted to see and hear things which we see and hear.² It did not enter their heart to imagine the things which are revealed to us by the Spirit of God as prepared for those that love Him.³

The reason of all this is stated by John: The Spirit was not yet given, that is, in His larger measures, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.⁴ Everything in its proper order. The honour due to God's majesty, law, and government required to be rendered by the great sacrifice, before sinners were filled with His abundant grace. The honour due to the Son of God required that, as His obedience unto death was to procure the Spirit, the Spirit's fuller outpourings should be reserved till Christ had finished His work and ascended to His glory. Moreover, a Saviour come and revealed in all His fulness, and a redemption completed and presented in all its freeness, were needful to place sinners in circumstances for valuing and improving aright the fullest measures in which the Spirit can be bestowed. But,

(4.) While the church received the Spirit only within a limited sphere, and in a feeble measure, previous to the coming of Christ, the word of prophecy taught that His coming would be attended by far more extensive and abundant measures of grace. The promise was that, when a king came to reign in righteousness the Spirit would be poured out from on high;⁵ or as it is said here in the words of Joel, "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh." Hence John the Baptist announced the near approach of

¹ 1 Pet. i.³ Isa. lxiv. ; 1 Cor. ii.⁵ Isa. xxxii., xliv., lix.² Matt. xiii.⁴ John vii.

Christ as about to baptize with the Holy Ghost.¹ Jesus declared to Nicodemus the necessity of being born of the Spirit.² He offered the Spirit to the woman of Samaria as the living water.³ He promised His Spirit to be in every believing soul a well of water springing up into everlasting life.⁴ Before His death He told the disciples over and over of the advantages to them of His departure to heaven, to send the Spirit down, to be in and with them and all His followers till the end of time. After His resurrection, He breathed on them saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." On the eve of His ascension, He told them to wait in prayerful expectation for the Spirit, whom He and His Father would send from on high.⁵ And no sooner had He gone up than the promises of the Spirit began to be fulfilled in this effusion of Him on the day of Pentecost. This leads us to notice—

2. The work of the Spirit from the day of Pentecost onward through all ages of the gospel dispensation.

Now that Christ had come, and finished His work, and taken His place on the mediatorial throne, no hindrance longer existed to the copious descent of the Spirit. Justice was satisfied. The law was magnified and made honourable. The way into God's holy presence was clearly revealed. The minds of men were prepared for brighter and more comprehensive views of the love of God, of the work of Christ, and of all spiritual and eternal things. The shadows and dawns of a long morning had been succeeded by the light of an advancing day. God's paths indeed had in all ages dropped fatness. But the time had now come for showers of blessing.

The day of Pentecost was significantly chosen for the

¹ Matt. iii.

² John iii.

³ John iv.

⁴ John vii.

⁵ Acts i.

commencement of these communications. That day among the Jews signalised the gathering in of their harvest, by the offering of the first-fruits unto God.¹ And now the ingathering of thousands of souls under the power of the Spirit on that day, began that ingathering of sinners to Christ under the power of the same Spirit, that shall go on from age to age till the harvest of sinners saved is completed, and the whole church of the redeemed is ready to be presented by Christ to His Father, and conducted by Him into the everlasting kingdom.

The same thing is intimated by the name given to the gospel dispensation of "the ministration of the Spirit."² The name implies that the great agent on earth in applying to the souls of men the redemption purchased by Christ, is the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, when the gospel comes with power, it comes in the Holy Ghost.³ Gracious affections are fruits of the Spirit found only in those who live and walk in the Spirit.⁴ None are saved except by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.⁵ And Ordinances are effectual to salvation only in so far as in and through them Christ is pleased to accompany them with the grace of His Spirit.⁶ The only hope for this world is that in a more and more abundant manner the Lord shall yet pour out His Spirit on all flesh. When the Spirit is thus poured out from on high, the wilderness shall be turned into a fruitful field.⁷ Nations shall be born in a day; the Lord shall make bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all ends of the earth shall experience the salvation of our God. In fuller explanation of what so much concerns us, let us notice under another though not altogether a distinct head—

¹ Exod. xxiii.³ 1 Thess. i.⁵ Tit. iii.⁷ Isa. xxxii.² 2 Cor. iii.⁴ Gal. v.⁶ Ephes. iv.

IV. The nature and manner of the work of the Spirit that is now going on in the church and in the world, And

1. His miraculous gifts have long ceased. They served their purpose at the commencement of the gospel dispensation by attesting the authority of those whom the Lord employed to establish it, and by arresting the attention of the world upon its claims; and so they soon ceased. Surprising enough events, even of an outward and sensible character, may at times occur in connection with the work of the Spirit still. But outward effects of it, when they do ensue, are accidental accompaniments, and not essential characteristics of such a work. And the less it is mixed up and confounded with such outward accompaniments, the more likely it is to be genuine, solid, extensive, and enduring. It was not in the whirlwind or in the earthquake, but in the still, small voice, that the Lord made Himself known to His prophets of old. And the Lord Jesus has told us that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, but is within His people, a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

2. In setting up the kingdom of Christ in men, the Spirit acts upon them, in what we have described, first, as His common operations; and, second, as His saving grace.

(1.) The Spirit acts upon men in His common operations. That is to say, in His providential government and disposal of them, He brings them into contact with the outward ordinances of His word, and then so presents the word to them, and so causes them to realise its truth, as to render them inexcusable if they quench their convictions and refuse to yield to its power.

(2.) The Spirit follows up these common operations in the case of all who are brought to believe unto salvation, by putting forth upon them His saving power, by

actually regenerating their moral nature, by creating them anew in Christ unto good works, by quickening them to a new life, by dwelling and working in them, by making their very bodies His temples, by implanting and cherishing in their hearts all holy affections, by guiding and supporting them in the performance of their duty, and by leading them in this manner onward and upward to the land of uprightness.

3. As to the manner in which He savingly works on the minds and hearts of men, the following things are to be remembered—

(1.) The Spirit gives no new revelations to the minds of believers apart from, or in addition to, those that are contained in the Bible. The Quakers held, and more or fewer of them still hold, that such revelations are afforded. And the same opinion is taken up and acted on, especially in times of religious excitement, by some who are in an ill-instructed, perverse, or fanatical state of mind. This notion of theirs, however, is a mere and mischievous delusion, opening the door to extravagances and disorders which as effectually help the kingdom of Satan, and hinder the kingdom of Christ, as open enmity to religion, or the prevalence of indifference and of spiritual death. For—

(2.) The Spirit accomplishes His saving work in men only through the instrumentality of the Word and ordinances of God. It was while Peter and the other apostles were preaching the truth contained in Scripture, and pressing it on their hearers, that the Spirit, employing it as His instrument, came upon them with power and converted thousands of them unto God. While it is the same Spirit that still regenerates and sanctifies believers, it is by the same word of truth that they are begotten¹ and sanctified.²

¹ Jas. i.

² John xvii.

They are chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.¹ It is by being builded on the foundation of the apostles and prophets that they are raised into an habitation of God through the Spirit.² It is only from the ordinances, as wells of salvation, that any can draw the living and life-giving water of the Spirit.³ God puts His Spirit in His people, and so causes them to walk in His statutes, and to keep His judgments, and do them.

(3.) The presence and power of the Spirit in those in whom He is accomplishing a saving change, are to be ascertained only by the effects of His grace. They do not themselves know, and they cannot enable others to know, His presence, His indwelling, and His inworking, by His appearing in any visions which their bodily eyes can witness, or by His uttering any sounds which their bodily ears can hear, or by His assuming any material form with which they can come into bodily contact, or by any direct manifestation of Himself to their imagination of which they can have a lively perception, apart from all revelation of the truth in the word of God. On the contrary, the Spirit operates upon them only in and through the truth revealed and recorded. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. It is in the effects produced in their hearts and lives that any can have credible evidence of their having become the subjects of the Spirit's saving work. Let them be convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Let them find the Scriptures rendered profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; so that, as men of God, they become thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And let them be inclined and endeavour to

¹ 2 Thess. ii.

² Ephes. ii.

³ Isa. xii.

walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. And assuredly in that case they have the only evidence that can be possessed, and all the evidence needful to satisfy them that the saving work of the Spirit is begun and being carried on within them.

V. *Practical remarks.*

1. In its important practical bearings, this subject enters into everything connected with our faith and duty, our privileges and practice, our interests and hopes. For while Christ has purchased redemption, He has placed us under the ministration of the Spirit, that He may apply redemption to our souls. It is not enough for us that Christ has satisfied divine justice for our offences, and opened up the way for the return of the guiltiest to God, and that He presses on our acceptance the offers of salvation, and establishes and upholds among us the ordinances through which the blessings of salvation are conveyed. One thing more is indispensable in order to our actual experience and enjoyment of redemption, and that is, its application to our souls by the Holy Spirit. And this is the great work which, under the dealings of divine providence and the dispensations of divine grace, is going on in the world. So that the amount of good which we have received from the Gospel is exactly measured by the extent to which the Spirit has sanctified our nature. And if we are without the Spirit, whatever be our religious professions, attainments, or exertions, we still have in us that carnal mind which is enmity against God.

2. Ordinances serve no saving purpose except as the Holy Spirit is in them and operating through them on those by whom they are observed. The Bible remains to its readers a sealed book, except as the Spirit opens their eyes to behold its wonders. The sabbath is a weariness to all,

except to those who are in the Spirit on the Lord's day. The preaching of Christ, and Him crucified, is a stumbling-block or foolishness to all, except to those to whom the Spirit renders it the power of God and the wisdom of God for their salvation. The offering of prayer is fruitless as to all saving effects, except as the Spirit helps the infirmities of suppliants, and intercedes within them while Christ is interceding for them, and the Hearer of prayer satisfies the desires thus divinely created in their souls. The fellowship of saints is without comfort except as the Spirit of Christ is with their spirits, to convey His refreshing influence from heart to heart through acts of brotherly intercourse and communion. Baptism with water does no good spiritually to those who receive it, except as they are baptized with the Holy Ghost, and so buried with Christ and dead to sin, and raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. And the Lord's supper itself, with all its impressive representations, is a useless or even injurious formality, destitute of all spiritual meaning and benefit to those who receive it except as the Lord Jesus, by His Spirit given to them, makes Himself known to them in the breaking of bread, and causes their hearts to burn within them with holy desires and the blessed experience of His love.

3. Christ Himself and the benefits of His purchase do not become ours, except as they are conveyed to us by His Spirit. He appears to natural men without form or comeliness, and the treasures of wisdom and grace that are in Him are hidden from their eyes, until the Spirit takes of the things that are Christ's and shows them to their minds, and they thus begin to see His glory, and to receive out of His fulness. When any are enabled to draw nigh to God as sin-pardoning and gracious, it is because through Christ they have access by one Spirit unto the Father. When any are brought into His family, and partake of the privi-

leges and hopes of His children, it is by having the Spirit as the Spirit of adoption in them, crying, Abba Father. When any are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and die to sin and live to righteousness, this change is accomplished "through sanctification of the Spirit," and because their bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost. When any make their light to shine before men, it is because the Spirit of God writes His law on the fleshly tables of their hearts, and thus turns them into living epistles of Christ which all men can know and read.¹ When any come to know the love of Christ, and to be filled with the fulness of God, it is by their being strengthened with all might by His Spirit in their inner man.² The holy satisfaction found by believers in the ordinances and service of Christ is joy in the Holy Ghost. In the anticipations of heaven that gladden them the Holy Spirit is sealing them to the day of redemption, and proving within them the earnest of their inheritance.

4. Not less dependent are believers on the Spirit to enable them to cherish and exercise the gracious affections, and to perform the actions, and pursue the course of new creatures in Christ. While their life is found in knowing God and Jesus Christ, it is the Spirit alone who can guide them into all truth, who can glorify Christ by taking the things that are His and showing them to their minds, and who can, by His anointing, teach them all things. Christians are to look to Jesus, and lean and live on Him by faith; but this faith is the gift of God, by being a fruit of the Spirit in all who have it. Believers are to look on Him whom they have pierced, and be in bitterness for sin; but this repentance flows only from the Spirit of grace and supplication poured out upon them. We are to love God; but

¹ 2 Cor. iii.

² Eph. iii.

the love of God can be shed abroad in our hearts only by the Holy Ghost given to us. Brethren in Christ are to love each other; but it is only when they obey the truth through the Spirit that they love one another with a pure heart fervently. Children of God are to walk circumspectly; but they walk thus only when filled with the Spirit.¹ They are to walk in the way to heaven; but it is the good Spirit of God alone that leads them to the land of uprightness.²

5. As the whole work of carrying forward redemption to its practical saving results in the character and destiny of men is thus in the hands of the Holy Spirit, it is well to know and remember that He is alike able and willing to perform it. He is able to do it. For He is the eternal Spirit from whom we cannot go, who searcheth all things, and is full of wisdom, power, and goodness; by whose creative energy all things were at first made; by whose all-pervading presence and agency they are preserved and governed; who formed the human nature of Jesus in His virgin-mother, endowed it with all possible perfection, sustained Him in offering Himself a sacrifice for sin, and then raised Him from the dead; and who is now, in fact, the sum of all the gifts which from His exalted throne the Lord Jesus is dispensing to men. And the Spirit is as willing as He is able to perform His divine work in our salvation. For He is the Spirit of goodness, grace, and love, who moves up and down in the world, enters every heart that is opened to receive Him, and dwells and works in all believers, quickening, leading, sanctifying, strengthening, and comforting them, until He conducts them to heaven, full of His own light, and holiness, and joy.

¹ Eph. v.

² Ps. cxliii.

XVI.

REST IN CHRIST FOR THE LABOURING AND HEAVY-LADEN.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take up my yoke, and learn of me, . . . and ye shall find rest to your souls.”—MATT. xi. 28, 29.

JESUS had just been led by His notice of the rejection of Himself and of John His forerunner, to proclaim nothing but woe to the generation around Him for their earthliness and intractable pride. He then adored His Father's sovereignty in leaving such enemies of the truth to their self-chosen blindness, while causing the humble-minded and teachable to feel its saving power. To show that the tenderest mercy to the one class consists with the greatest severity to the other, we have this gracious invitation from the lips of Jesus, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest,” &c.

I. The persons addressed are the labouring and heavy-laden.

1. Those immediately addressed were two classes of Jews. *First*, there were the oppressed and unhappy slaves of the traditions of the elders, who laid heavy burdens as religious obligations on the people, which they themselves took care not to touch with one of their fingers; and Jesus invites the people to abandon these inventions of priest-craft, and to come to Him for the rest which, without money and without price, He was ready to give them; rest from

guilt and fear, and rest in the favour, love, and service of God. *Second*, there were others who, while rejecting these burdensome inventions of scribes and elders, and, confining themselves to the observance of the law of Moses, found even it, as their fathers before them found it, a yoke which they were unable comfortably to bear: and Jesus here invites them to come to Him, and to find in Him and in His salvation rest from their ceremonial bondage and uncertainty, rest in the spiritual light and life and liberty and gladness which He had come to bestow.

2. There are two great classes still addressed in these words.

First, Many are vainly seeking rest for their souls in the world; some in the sweat of their brow; others in a larger portion, which is more troublesome than poverty itself; others in still greater abundance, which is only fraught with still greater trouble; others in higher positions still, in which events are constantly occurring to fret their ambition, and gall their pride. Others in sufferings from the hands of men; others in visitations of affliction from the hand of God. But however they differ otherwise, they one and all seek for a satisfying portion in the world, where it can never be found. They feed on ashes, and sup up the east wind. They spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. They labour in the fire, and weary themselves for very vanity. They go up and down through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. Mortifications mingle with all their delights. Sighs of sadness blend with their songs of mirth. They often feel deeply solitary, even among scenes of gaiety. Hours of depression follow moments of excitement. If they look inward, they are miserable. They are forced to escape from self-reflection. The future is looked forward to with misgiving and fears. In times of affliction they

are sickened by the sight of their unprofitable stores. When life is drawing to a close, all things, past, present, and future, are being lost to them in impenetrable darkness.

To all such Jesus here proclaims that, so long as they remain ignorant of, or separated from Him, and look to the things around them for the food which their souls require, they seek the living among the dead; they seek for grapes on thorns, and figs on thistles; for living water in broken cisterns; for quietness on a troubled sea; for solid ground to stand upon, in the shifting sands: and He warns them that they never can know what safety is, until they betake themselves to Him, and abide in Him as their refuge, and rest on Him as the Rock of their salvation.

Second, The labouring and heavy-laden specially addressed in these words are those whose eyes are so far opened on their state by nature and practice as to feel their sinfulness and fear its consequences. They are burdened by their manifold and heinous sins. While their carnal-mindedness remains, nothing is blessed to them. Prosperity is their ruin. In affliction they are without comfort. The departure of friends and neighbours from time warns them of the possible nearness of their final doom. The sight of others' christian joy deepens their own forebodings. The promises as much as the threatenings of scripture seem ominous only of evil to them. To mention God's name, is to excite their fear of His anger. To speak of His law, is to pronounce their condemnation. To speak of His gospel, is to speak of their danger as having neglected the great salvation. They begin to hear the earth groaning under their feet, as if weary to bear them on its surface. They begin to wonder that the very air which they breathe, and the very food which they eat, instead of being ministers of life, are not turned into ministers of death to them. In

short, every object in nature, and every event in providence, and every part of the word of God become fraught to their imagination with sources of evil, and occasions for fear. Sin is thus bitter to them, even while yielding to it; the comforts of life lose their relish; they have little sympathy with the ways of those around them, and others have little sympathy with them; they lose their taste for the business of life; they pine away in their iniquity; they are troubled and bowed down greatly, and go mourning all the day; their bones wax old through their roaring all the day long, for day and night the hand of the Lord is heavy upon them, and their moisture is turned into the drought of summer. They feel consumed by His anger, and troubled by His wrath. Thus "they labour" indeed, "and are heavy-laden."

II. The rest promised by Christ to the labouring and heavy-laden who come to Him.

The rest is promised to the labouring and heavy-laden who come to Christ. In coming to Him, they believe in Him, receive Him, and rest upon Him alone for their salvation. They no longer look or go to other quarters for help. Even their sighs and tears, and confessions and purposes and acts of reformation are seen to be but refuges of lies when trusted in, for peace; and they betake themselves to Christ alone, as the only ark of their salvation, the only city of refuge, the only hope set before them in the gospel.

1. The rest which they experience from their previous life-long state of sin and misery, when they first come to Christ and believe on Him unto salvation.

They seek shelter and abide under the covert of His blood; and their sins are pardoned; the thick cloud that was raised between them and God is blotted out; the light of His reconciled countenance is lifted upon them, and they are accepted

in the beloved ; the fears of His displeasure subside ; a feeling of His forgiveness takes possession of, and tranquillises their souls ; and they begin to joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom they have received the reconciliation. Not only so ; but in thus leading them to Christ, the Holy Spirit, by accompanying the word with His regenerating power, has so enlightened their understandings and renewed their wills, as to animate them with the heavenly thoughts and desires, and aims and hopes of those who are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. In being thus enabled to come to Christ, they get a peace unknown before. They look now for good at the hand of God. Things wear to them now a smiling aspect. The out-goings of the morning and evening rejoice over them. They eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. They praise the Lord for turning His anger away, forgiving their transgression and covering their sin ; helping them when brought low ; redeeming their life from destruction, and crowning them with loving-kindness and tender mercy. They are no longer tossed as they were before on a sea of darkness and of storms : realising the presence and hearing the voice of Jesus, a heavenly sunshine fills their souls. They have come to Christ, and He has given them rest.

2. The rest promised to believers all through their life of faith, on taking the yoke of Christ and learning of Him.

It has to be here emphatically stated, and to be carefully remembered, that notwithstanding the restful relations into which the labouring and heavy-laden are brought by this coming to Christ, in their after-life as christians they are liable to many afflictions, from which they require continually to come anew to Christ for rest, the further and habitually renewed rest which He promises to those who live dependent on His guidance and obedient to His will. They have to deny themselves and take up their cross, all

through life, and follow Christ, if they would at last win the crown. They have entered on a journey through the wilderness, and are to conduct themselves as pilgrims and strangers here. They have enlisted as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and must endure hardness, fight the good fight, and be faithful unto death, if they would receive the crown of life. They have engaged in a race in which they must win all, or lose all: and if they would be winners, they must lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset them, and, with unfaltering eagerness and energy, run the race set before them, looking to Jesus; they have been called to a life of toil and trial in the service of Christ, and must work the work assigned to them while it is day, and not weary in well-doing, but be willing to spend themselves and be spent in doing and suffering for His glory in their own and others' salvation, so that He may be magnified in their body, by life and death.

It is only in thus facing and laboriously performing the work assigned to them, in thus steadily running the race set before them, in thus contending with and conquering all evil agencies and powers, and in thus finding their way through the wilderness that lies before them, however full of straits and dangers, that they obey the call of Christ to take His yoke upon them and to learn of Him, and that they find His promise fulfilled, Ye shall find rest to your souls. To see this more clearly and fully, let the following particulars be noticed.

First. Even after any have come as labouring and heavy-laden to Christ, and He has given them rest, there remains in their minds much spiritual ignorance to darken and perplex them. They have still confused, unsatisfactory apprehensions of spiritual things. These spiritual apprehensions are often obscured by the earthly objects that are allowed to rush in and occupy their

minds and hearts. They thus lose or weaken their power of discriminating between truth and error, between good and evil. And their path consequently becomes perplexed, unsteady, and comfortless. In this condition of unrest, their way is not in themselves; the light that they need comes from the Sun of righteousness. In His light alone can they see light clearly. Sitting at His feet, listening to His words, looking up to Him for His Spirit, Christ guides them, when blind, in a way that they know not, leads them in paths that they have not known, makes darkness light before them, and crooked places straight; does these things unto them, and does not forsake them. He makes His word to dwell in them richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; putting His Spirit in them, He causes them to walk in His statutes, and to keep His judgments and do them. And thus in proportion as they are taught the way that they should choose, their soul dwelleth at ease.

Second. The felt power of the sin that remains in them, and that is constantly ready to rise into action, is a great cause of uneasiness and fear from day to day. It turns them from duty, or unfits them for the due performance of duty. It estranges them from God, and deprives them of their proper relish for His word and ordinances. It defiles their heart and life with evil thoughts, words, and actions. It renders their head sick and their heart faint. It makes them to groan with wretchedness that they feel themselves still to such an extent under the body of corruption which they have still to drag about with them. Against this remaining sin in them they find it impossible to struggle successfully in their own strength. Neither do they find deliverance from it in any change of outward circumstances. And when they think of the holiness of God, and of heaven, and what is needful to fit them for His presence, they are filled with restlessness, anxiety, and apprehension at the

presence and workings of this remaining sin in their thoughts and tempers, their speech and conduct. No freedom from this indwelling corruption is found in their own unaided efforts, or in the help of others. But the deliverance needed is found by them in Christ. While in His revealed presence their very comeliness turns into corruption, and they fall at His feet as dead, He lays His hand upon them, raises them up to live before Him, strengthens them with might by His Spirit in their inner man, and becomes Himself their light and life. Yielding themselves up to His guidance and government, He washes them in His blood, and sanctifies them by His word and Spirit; by His death He redeems them from iniquity and purifies them to Himself; they are made to feel and act as crucified with Him, and as they that live by Christ living in them; because He lives, they live also; risen with Him, they walk in newness of life; through His Spirit they strive to mortify the deeds of their body and live; they are under law to Christ; they endeavour to serve Him as their Lord and Master; to live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. They seek to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, to be conformed to His image, to have His mind in them, to imitate His example, to walk in His steps.

And in proportion as they are thus enabled to take His yoke upon them and bear it, is the rest which they experience. If they sow in tears, they reap in joy. If they mourn for sin, they receive beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Their rejoicing is this, the testimony of their conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have their conversation in this world. In proportion as they serve the

Lord in holiness and righteousness, they serve Him without fear. Light and gladness are sown for them as righteous, and as upright in heart. The work of righteousness is found by them to be peace, and the effect of it quietness and assurance for ever. They are satisfied from themselves, from what grace has done within them. They study to put on love as the bond of perfectness, and the peace of God rules in their hearts. They thus take the yoke of Christ upon them and learn of Him, and so find rest to their souls.

Third. In so far as Satan succeeds in his efforts to seduce or frighten them from the way of faith and holiness, he keeps believers oppressed by uneasiness and fear.

It might have been supposed beforehand that as regards those who have come to Christ and found peace in believing, Satan would henceforth let them alone, as knowing from much bitter experience how vain are all his efforts to baffle that wisdom or bear down that power of Christ, under the guidance and protection of which all believers are placed and kept. But he probably remains ignorant of the fact of who are really Christ's, and slow to believe in the evidences which they give of it, while he is full of the hatred and malice which prompt him to show undying enmity to them and to their Redeemer and Lord, by plying them with all the cunning, and harassing them with all the violence which, for wise reasons, he is, under limitations, permitted to employ against them. And so they can never exactly tell at what time, from what quarter, or in what manner he will assail them. Only they are informed in scripture, and made to know from actual experience, that many are the devices and the assaults by which he seeks to entrap and to undo them.

Now under these temptations they have no wisdom of their own to detect his presence and devices, and no power

of their own to withstand his assaults ; and they are therefore liable to manifold perplexities, agitations, and fears ; and, indeed, were there no higher refuge than their own wisdom or might, in which to take shelter from Satan's cunning and his rage, even believers would inevitably be allured or carried headlong to their ruin. But in Jesus they have a Saviour, who, being the Son of God, came into the world, God manifested in the flesh, for the very purpose of destroying the works of the devil, and who, in personal encounter with the wicked one, spoiled him of his pretensions, covered him with confusion, and annihilated his power. And so in all the troubles which their great enemy causes to them, they come to Jesus that He may teach them by His word and Spirit, and rule and defend, or deliver them by His power. And the wiliest and most dangerous and seductive of Satan's approaches are thus discovered to them and despised, and the most fiery darts which he can discharge at them are thus blunted, and fall powerless at their feet. And while refreshed by the grace by which they are enabled thus to triumph over him, this grace of Christ is made so sufficient for them, and His strength is so perfected in their weakness, that they rest in safety and comfort behind the defence that Jesus thus proves to them, while Satan shrinks from assailing their Shield and Buckler.

Fourth. As Christ forewarned His followers, none can believe in Him, and give themselves up to His service, without such a separation from the men of the world, and such opposition to their ways, as are sure to attract and engage their attention and to excite their surprise, their annoyance, their reproaches, their ridicule, their slanderous speeches ; and to bring upon the objects of their dislike such other injuries and wrongs as contempt, hatred, and vindictiveness are able to inflict. Such experiences and liabilities of christians, on account of their faith in and obedience to

Christ, are very trying to their flesh and blood; they are, indeed, often harder to bear than would be death itself. Strong temptations, too, thus arise to believers to conceal their faith, to conform to the customs, maxims, and examples of the world, and to prove unfaithful in the service of Christ, to His dishonour, their own injury, and the hurt of immortal souls. And so they are troubled not only by the working of the world's enmity, but by the questionable or unworthy means which they employ to escape from it.

When thus harassed for their profession of the gospel, and at the same time for their conscious unfaithfulness to its claims, there is no rest, no true, solid, satisfying rest for them, except in coming to Christ, repenting of their unfaithfulness, and receiving through His blood pardon for the past, and in so surrendering themselves to His guidance and control, that they henceforward count His reproach greater riches than all the treasures of earth. For in thus taking up their cross and following Christ, they are supported and cheered by their conscious fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, by His indwelling Spirit as the Comforter, by the felt presence of their Father in heaven, and by the hope of soon dwelling in His house for ever.

Fifth. A more constantly operating occasion of disquietude and depression to many Christians is the thought of their present or future temporal lot on earth.

As has been justly remarked, they often find it easier to look to Christ, and to trust Him for eternal life with Himself above, than for the temporal provision which, for a short time, they need by the way. They find it difficult to make the ends to meet, and they cannot pierce the clouds that hang over the future to them. They are too apt, like unbelievers around, to separate God from His own world, and especially from their own individual concerns, and to feel and act as if, so far at least as

regards temporal events, mankind were left uncontrolled, unprovided for, to work out their own destiny for time. Coming too readily and too often under the power of the atheistic spirit which prevails all around them, no wonder that the followers of Christ are so apt to be tossed on a sea of troubles with reference to what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed.

Nor is there any remedy for such corroding cares, except in coming to Christ, and taking His yoke upon them, and learning of Him. The more simply and unreservedly that is done, the more quietly and confidently will they live upon the providence as well as grace of Jesus. They will learn, like Himself when on earth, to live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. In seeking first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, while diligent in their earthly calling, they expect and do not fail to experience, that things really needful are added to them. They will endeavour to be content with such things as they have, remembering Christ's promise, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. And they will find rest in the utterance breathed for ages, from childhood to old age, by all who love Christ, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want . . . Thou spreadest a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Sixth. The afflictions, personal and relative, which come more immediately from the hand of God, to chasten and prove His people, are in their own nature, and for the present, not joyous but grievous. And the bodily pain and mental sufferings which believers experience, are often greatly aggravated by their inability to search out and understand the designs of God in sending them. So that, like Job, they are, amidst their trials and affliction, tempest-

tossed, and incapable of taking in the truth and the comfort which it would bring to them.

When thus brought down and crushed under the burden of their afflictions, their spirit can attain to no quietness, but is tossed from billow to billow, so long as they look to human causes of their calamities, and to human remedies for their removal, and so despise the chastening of the Lord, or so long as they see nothing but anger in the Lord's visitation of them, and therefore faint under His rebuke. And their only yet sure way of deliverance from their murmurings and moanings, their agitations and alarms, and of attaining to meekness, and patience, and hope, under all their afflictions from the hand of God, is just to place themselves in the hands of Christ, and at His disposal, and to hear and obey His voice, and trust His grace, and faithfulness and power. For then they are made to see and feel that His sufferings have taken the sting from theirs—that having a fellowship in His sufferings, and conformableness to His death, are preparing them for a glorious resurrection in Him to life eternal—that meanwhile they have with them the sympathy of Him who learned obedience by the things that He suffered, and is afflicted in all their afflictions—that by His word and Spirit in them they are being more effectually taught the evil of sin, the vanity of earthly things, the virtue of His peace-speaking blood, the preciousness and power of His grace, the reality of His presence and faithfulness, and the sustaining and purifying power of the believer's hope as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil—that their tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope—and that in short as their sufferings abound, their consolations in Christ correspondingly abound.

Seventh. The rest that is thus given by Christ to those who come to Him and take His yoke upon them, and learn

of Him, is experienced by them not only throughout their christian course on earth, but at the conclusion of it.

When death approaches, their heart and flesh will fail them. But even in the dark valley He is nigh with His rod and staff to comfort them with His guidance and His strength. When they pass through the waters, He is with them. When they pass through the floods, they do not overflow them. When they walk through the fire they are not burned; neither doth the flame kindle upon them. Death to them is deprived of its sting, and changed from the king of terrors into a messenger of peace. Death is not dissolution leading to darkness and final ruin. It is a falling asleep to rest in their beds, from which they are soon to wake again to immortal life. It is the departure of their soul to the rest that shall never be broken, or disturbed, or come to an end.

Concluding remarks.

1. The rest which the Lord Jesus Christ bestows on His believing, and obedient, and truthful followers is not merely that feeling of deliverance from wrath and condemnation, and of access to and acceptance with God as their reconciled God and Father in Christ which convicted, burdened, and weary ones experience when first translated out of darkness into marvellous light. While they live on earth, the rest which Christ gives to them while working out their salvation with fear and trembling, is such a rest as is found time after time in Him, in the continual warfare between what is now the law of their mind, and the law which is still in their members, and in wrestling with principalities and powers, with spiritual wickedness in high places. And yet it is a true satisfying rest, a sweet, refreshing, reviving rest found in the felt nearness and all-sufficient grace of the ever-present Redeemer; found in the light

with which He shines into their hearts, and on their path; found in the purifying power of His word and Spirit on their affections and desires; found in their conscious deliverances from the devices and assaults of the wicked one; found in the self-denial, faith, and patience, uprightness, and humility, and meekness which they are enabled to exercise in the midst of evil-doers; found in mercies enriched by His grace, in afflictions from which that grace has taken the sting; found, when their heart and flesh are failing, in the Lord's proving the strength of their heart and their portion for ever.

2. But there are awakened and earnest inquirers who say that they have not found this rest—that they are under the burden of their sins, in spiritual darkness, full of doubts and fears, in the midst of troubles and dangers, beset by enemies, shut out from the presence of God, and know not where to find Jesus.

The reason of this is not in Christ. He is able and willing to help them, and to help them now. He invites them, and is ready to welcome them; He raises no obstacles in their way. And He will in no wise cast them out if they come to Him. He ever stands at the door of their heart and knocks, ready, if they will but open the door, to enter and begin a blessed and eternal fellowship.

If the reason is not in Christ, it must be in themselves. Some evil habit has still a firmer hold of them than Christ and His salvation; and so long as that is the case, though they sigh, they will go backward. In particular, when, perhaps, no other form of prevailing evil in their nature or conduct is easily to be traced, a secret and subtle pride may remain to prevent that submission to Christ which is followed by rest. Then in their trouble they may betake themselves to prayers, and fastings, and tears, and other self-afflicting exercises, and all the while they may be

labouring to make out a personal claim to the forbearance and forgiveness and favour of God. No wonder if in that case their darkness and distress continue or increase. For relief is impossible until their hearts are so thoroughly humbled that they lie down at the feet of Jesus as alike helpless and unworthy ; helpless in themselves, and unworthy of help from Him. Then do they find His hand laid in mercy on them, and His revealed presence within them, proving the light and life and strength of their souls.

XVII.

THE LOVE OF THE REDEEMED TO CHRIST.

“Whom having not seen, ye love.”—1 PET. i. 8.

IN considering these words, we may notice the object of the love here spoken of: the subjects of it, or those by whom it is experienced and shown; the nature and the causes of it; the necessity of it; and its evidences, or the way in which it is manifested.

I. The OBJECT of this love. The object of it is the unseen Saviour, “Whom having not seen, ye love.”

The final appearing of Jesus Christ is referred to in the immediately preceding words (verse 7), as well as in many other parts of scripture, as the great crisis at which His people shall be abundantly recompensed for their faith in Him, and love to Him, and for all their labours and sufferings in His service.

The Lord Jesus will then come in visible glory. “Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him.”¹

When His glory is thus revealed, His people shall not be ashamed, but have confidence and humble boldness, and be glad before Him with exceeding joy.

The reason why they are then enabled thus to welcome His final “glorious appearing,” is that their hearts are established unblamable in holiness; that they are found arrayed in that fine linen, clean and white, which is the

¹ Rev. i.

righteousness of saints, and are made like to Him so as to enable them to see Him as He is.

At present, however, the still sinful condition of the best of the followers of Christ unfits them for making a right use of any such visible representations of Himself as He gave in the days of His flesh, or of such as He will give when He comes a second time. Were He to appear again in the humble form which He took in the days of His flesh, the carnality which is still even in believers would make them to look more at the outward meanness of His appearance than at the heavenly character which He carried beneath it, and so to slight Him as He was slighted when He dwelt on earth. Were He, on the other hand, to appear in the glorious form in which He appeared to the apostle John, and in which He will soon reveal Himself to all, the consciously sinful state in which the best of His followers still find themselves would fill them with overwhelming fear at His presence, or lay them, like even the beloved disciple, at His feet, as dead.

It thus suits the present half-sanctified and yet habitually advancing spiritual state of believers to walk by faith rather than by sight. For it is not outward and sensible manifestations of Christ which faith regards, but the moral excellencies of His divine character, and the spiritual blessings of His redeeming work.

And when the eye of their faith takes in the revelation which His word, accompanied by His Spirit, affords to them of His character and work as a Saviour, the eye of their faith affects their heart, and the words are fulfilled in their experience, "Whom having not seen, ye love," &c.

II. Consider who are the subjects of this love, or by whom it is experienced, cherished, and made manifest.

The persons to whom it was more immediately ascribed

by the apostle were strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia: chosen of God, sanctified by the Spirit, sprinkled by the blood of Jesus, begotten to the lively hope of the heavenly inheritance, kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, rejoicing greatly amidst the heaviest trials, and manifesting a faith much more precious than the gold that perisheth, though tried by fire.¹ The persons who still feel and display this love to Christ have undergone a similar divine change in their character, condition, and prospects. They too have become pilgrims and strangers on the earth, heirs and expectants of the heavenly inheritance. They too have been washed from their sins in the blood of Christ, and regenerated by His Spirit, and quickened to a life of holy obedience. They are raised up together with the risen Saviour, to set their affections on things above, and are waiting for their approaching and final salvation. In the exercise of faith and patience they endure the temptations and troubles of their present state, in the cherished desire and expectation of the final glorious appearing of Christ, the acceptance which awaits them in His presence then, and the place to which He will conduct them in His everlasting kingdom.

III. Observe the nature and causes of true love to Christ.

Love to any object implies a true or fancied perception of good qualities in it, that renders it worthy of esteem. Love also implies a feeling of personal interest in the object loved. There can be no love on our part to an object which has in our eyes nothing lovable in it. Nor can we love an object between which and ourselves there is no link of friendly connection.

¹ 1 Pet. i. 1-7.

Love to Christ is love to Him both for His personal character and for the benefits which He bestows. Some, indeed, have argued that true love to Jesus is what they call disinterested love, or love to Him for what He is in Himself, or for what He is to others, without any regard to any personal interest which such as feel that love may have in His favour. Others, again, have represented love to Jesus as awakened and sustained only by the blessings which they receive or expect from His hands. Both views are, we think, incorrect. The Bible blends these two views of Christ together in placing Him before us as the object of our love. It sets forth His excellencies in connection with His redeeming work, and His redeeming work in connection with those inherent attributes of His nature from which that work proceeds. And it calls upon us to love Him on both accounts, to love Him as altogether lovely, and to love Him also as having first loved us. As an affection which has regard both to His personal character and to His benefits, true love to Christ is at once a love of delight, a love of desire, and a love of good-will. It is a love of delight; for they who exercise it see and relish His excellence and grace, saying of Him, "My beloved is fairer than the sons of men," "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." It is a love of desire: "With my soul have I desired thee in the night season; with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." And it is a love of good-will: "Blessed be His glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory."

The nature and character of true love to Christ will be more clearly seen by considering the causes of the love which the redeemed have for the unseen Saviour.

1. They love Him for the benefits which He imparts, for His words of grace and deeds of mercy, and their interest in both. They love Him because He first loved them.

(1.) They love Him for His words of grace. He tells us that in the depths of the past eternity, in the view of what He had undertaken to do for the salvation of sinners, He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and had His delights with the sons of men.¹ In the view of His incarnation, earthly ministry, and obedience unto death, He prophetically exclaimed, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart."² He commenced His public ministry by declaring that in Him the words of Isaiah would now be fulfilled, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord:" and as He explained and enforced the application of these words to Himself, His hearers "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth."³ The language in which He still addresses all who hear the gospel is, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c.⁴ "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," &c.⁵ "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest," &c.⁶ "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."⁷ "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me."⁸

When sinners refuse to be gathered to Him, He complains, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." When they persist in their impenitence, until their state becomes hopeless, He weeps over them, saying, "Oh, that

¹ Prov. viii.³ Isa. lxi., Luke iv.⁵ John vii.⁷ John vi.² Ps. xl.⁴ Isa. lv.⁶ Matt. xi.⁸ Rev. iii.

thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace!" When He sees any doubting His willingness to receive them on their return, He says, As I live, I have no pleasure in your death; turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? When His people shut or keep Him out of their hearts, He says, "Open to me, my sister, my love, . . . for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." When the believer is made willing, ready, and joyful to receive Him as a Saviour from sin as well as from wrath, He says, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth: the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land," &c.¹ When the hearts of His people are filled with holy desires after Him, He comes into their hearts with manifestations of His gracious presence, saying, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

Now such words of grace as these cannot be listened to and felt by any without having their hearts inflamed with vehement desires after Jesus, into whose lips such grace is poured. Never man spake as He thus speaks to the understanding conscience and heart. And so when sinners are made to hear His voice as He stands knocking at the door of their hearts for admission, and when they know that He asks for nothing at their hands except a heart broken and contrite for sin, and when they find Him come nigh to bestow upon them, according to His promises, all the unsearchable riches of His grace, they are moved to open their hearts to Him and to let Him in. Harkening diligently

¹ Song of Sol. ii.

unto Him, they are made to eat that which is good, and their soul delights itself in fatness. Inclining their ear, they come to Him. Hearing Him, their soul is quickened into life. Henceforth their affections are set on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. And they are consciously taken into the everlasting covenant, and rendered partakers of its satisfying and enduring mercies.

(2.) His deeds of mercy equally with His words of grace enkindle and foster love to Christ in such as believe.

They see Him entering into an everlasting covenant with the Father for their redemption. They see Him coming to our first parents when they had fallen, and reviving them with the hope of salvation through His own mediatorial work. They see Him under the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations revealing Himself time after time in types and symbols, in prophecies, and even in visible forms, as the Saviour of His people, and in His love and pity redeeming them, and carrying them all the days of old. They see Him coming into the world in the fulness of time, taking our nature in the lowliest form, loading Himself with our sins and griefs, living in the midst of miserable sinners, performing miracles of mercy in their behalf, speaking to them words of grace, and giving light, and life, and peace to their souls. As the substitute of guilty millions of mankind, they see Him not only fulfilling the whole law of God, but bearing the punishment of His people's iniquity, suffering all evil at the hands of men while working out for them a great salvation; enduring the enmity of wicked spirits, and by that very means spoiling them of their power; and, above all, suffering the wrath of God due to sinners, becoming for them exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and at length forsaken of God that they may be delivered from that wrath and partake of infinite and everlasting mercy.

They see Him entering the grave and lying in it, to sanctify its gloomy precincts into a safe and cheerful resting-place for His people's dust. They see Him rising from the dead, ascending on high, taking possession of His Father's house, and there preparing places in its mansions for those on earth who listen to His voice and follow Him. They see Him living for evermore, and reigning as Head over heaven, earth, and hell, Head over all things to the church, and, from age to age, employing His almighty power in bringing many sons and daughters unto glory. They see Him preparing to make this earth the theatre of still greater triumphs of His cross, in the vastly increasing numbers whom He saves from age to age, even till the end of time. And they see Him preparing to gather the whole of His redeemed together to Himself in the great day, and to welcome them to the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Thus did Christ love the church, and give Himself for it, &c.¹ And now it is impossible for any to realise this love of Christ without loving Him in return, and being constrained to say, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and amen."

(3.) The personal interest which believers have in His words of grace and deeds of mercy excite in true believers this love to Christ.

To love Him in any aspects of His character implies a loving union between Him and them, and some degree of warrantable persuasion on their part, that this union exists. And therefore, when any love Jesus, they love Him as their own Redeemer. By His word and Spirit in them, He is their light in darkness. They are brought nigh to

¹ Eph. v.

God, and have peace with Him through the blood of the cross. In coming to God by Christ, they look to Him as able to save them to the uttermost, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. He casts Satan out of them, and enables them to resist and overcome the wicked one. He subdues their corruptions, and enables them to walk in newness of life. By His cross, the world is crucified to them, and they are crucified to the world. Casting their burdens on Him, He sustains them, and does not suffer them to be moved. Casting all their care upon Him, He cares for them. They spread their sorrows before Him, and experience His pity and help. They come to Him in the time of temptation, and obtain His succour. They find His grace made sufficient for them, and His strength perfected in their weakness. And while without Him they can do nothing, they find that through Him strengthening them, they can do all things. They believe, in short, that because He lives, they shall live also. Believers cannot take this view, have any of this personal experience of Christ's relation to themselves individually, without being constrained to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee: my heart and flesh faileth; but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

2. All who truly love Christ love Him for His personal character. "He is altogether lovely."

(1.) His nature and perfections as God produce and maintain in them this love to Him. They love Him as divine; as the true God;¹ as Jehovah on His throne, high and lifted up;² as the Holy One and the Just;³ as searching our reins and hearts;⁴ as He by whom all things were created and consist;⁵ and to whom all judgment is committed, that all may honour Him even as the Father.⁶

¹ 1 John v.

² Isa. vi.; John xii.

³ Acts iii.

⁴ Rev. i.

⁵ Col. i.

⁶ John v.

And so His people love Him with a love of reverence for His unsearchable greatness; with a love of submission to His sovereign authority; with a love of confidence in His grace and truth; and with a love of gratitude for all His benefits.

(2.) The humanity which He took and wears excites love to Christ in all His people. They love Him as a man.

As a man, He was without sin. It was His meat and drink to do His Father's will. Zeal for His Father's house ate Him up. His trust in His Father's love was ever unshaken. His submission to His Father's will was ever perfect. His communion with His Father was unceasing. As a man, all other virtues shone forth in Him with unmingled brightness. He lived in subjection to earthly parents. The spirit of wisdom breathed in all He said and did. When twelve years of age, He was found standing among the doctors, the learned men in the temple, answering and asking questions. The wisdom that filled Him never failed Him in all His intercourse with friends and foes. His love and practice of truth were incorruptible. He went about continually doing good. His meekness under injuries never forsook Him. And over all His other graces as a man, there was thrown the covering of perfect humility.

Such as love Christ love Him in this view of His character. They have a true active sympathy with every one of His virtues. They relish the pattern which these virtues afford, and strive to copy it, so as to have it in some degree transferred to their own character. They strive to imitate His piety and purity, His benevolence and self-control, His love of truth, His good-will to the souls and bodies of men, His patience and fortitude, His meekness and lowliness of mind. They long to have in them the same mind that was in Him. As He left to them an

example that they should walk in His steps, they endeavour to "walk even as He walked," to run the race set before them, looking to Jesus.

(3.) The wonderful union in Christ's person of the divine and human nature, is a special cause of the love to Him felt by the redeemed.

They love Him as God-man, as having the nature of God and the nature of man for ever mysteriously united in His one person. On this account they feel toward Him as the most peculiar and overwhelming object of attraction in the universe. They contemplate Him as a child born to us, and at the same time the mighty God, and as having all the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Him as the Man Christ Jesus. And so they join with all His servants in heaven, in adoring Him as the Lamb that was slain, now the Lamb in the midst of the throne. This love is awakened and maintained in them as they see that, by this union of the divine and human natures in His person, the whole distance between God and them is filled up, inasmuch as, in coming to Christ, they come to One who is bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, and who is not less truly at the same time very God.

IV. The necessity of this love to Christ becomes thus impressively manifest.

Without this love to Christ we can have no likeness to God, and fellowship with Him, and no place among His obedient and happy family.

1. Likeness to God, and fellowship with Him, depend on the possession and exercise of this love to Christ.

To be like to God, or near to Him, requires that what He reveals as the main object of His love, shall be the main object of ours. But Christ is infinitely more dear to Him than all things else. And so unless we love Christ

unspeakably more than all things else, we cannot either be like to God, or in fellowship with Him.

That Christ is so loved by the Father is evident. As the only begotten and eternal Son of the Father, He is the infinitely suitable object of the Father's infinite love. And so from eternity He "was by" the Father, as One "brought up with Him," and was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.¹ He was "in the bosom of the Father," and so filled His heart, that chiefly in respect of the Father's love to the Son from everlasting, it is said "God is love."²

Then when the Son became incarnate, and presented Himself before the eye of His Father as "God manifested in the flesh," He was, as the God-man, still further the object of the Father's infinite love. "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth."³ "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."⁴ This love of God to His own Son accounts for the trust reposed in Him by the Father, for the power committed to Him. "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth."⁵ "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands."⁶

If this be the love of the Father to the Son, we cannot be like to God further than as we love the Son also. The chief display of God's character is His love to Christ, and so the degree of our likeness to God is decided by the degree of our love to Christ; we are no further like to God than as we love chiefly what God chiefly loves, that is, His own Son. Our love to Christ must be, however faintly, an image of God's love to Him. If in the presence of the Father's love to His Son we have no love to Him, we have no love or likeness to God Himself; we have still in us

¹ Prov. viii.³ Isa. xlii.⁵ John v.² 1 John iv.⁴ Matt. iii. ; John xvi.⁶ John iii.

that carnal mind which is enmity against God, and is not and cannot be subject to His law.

In that case we can have no favour or fellowship with God. It is only as in Christ that any of our sinful race are loved by God. His love to such as are viewed by Him in Christ, is part of the love which He has for Christ passing onward to them. But such as do not love Christ are not in Him, and can have no experience of the love of God. And so they can have neither any right to fellowship with God, nor any fitness for it, nor any experience of it. This will appear more and more by considering that—

2. For those who are without love to Christ, there is and there can be no place in the great family of God.

Christ is the head of this divine family; and all its members are distinguished by their love to Him. Angels belong to it;¹ and love to Jesus prompts all their services. It fills them with the deepest interest in His redeeming work.² It keeps them continually ministering to the heirs of salvation.³ And it is breathed in all the praises which they raise before the throne.⁴ The redeemed on high belong to this family; and their life and blessedness are found in loving Christ, in being with Him⁵ in the fulness of joy which His presence yields,⁶ and in singing the new song to Him as having been slain, and as having thus redeemed them to God by His blood.⁷ The redeemed on earth belong to the same family. And they enter into it only by so loving Christ as to be ready to forsake all things for His sake.⁸ From the moment that any are thus minded, all grace is with them as loving Christ in sincerity; both the Father and the Son love them, and come and make their abode with them.⁹

¹ Ephes. i. iii.¹

² Ephes. iii. ; 1 Pet. i.

³ Heb. ii.

⁴ Rev. v.

⁵ Phil. i.

⁶ Ps. xvi.

⁷ Rev. v.

⁸ Ps. xlv. ; Matt. x.

⁹ John xiv.

Love to Christ is thus the connecting link that binds every member of the great family of God to every other, and that binds all of them to the service and fellowship of Christ Himself, as their divine and divinely-constituted Head, and that also binds them all fast in willing and blissful homage to the throne of God. It is love to Christ that alone leads any of this sinful race to occupy a place within the precincts of the holy and happy creation, and fits them for a share in its spiritual employments and blessed fellowships. To be without this love, whatever else is possessed, is to be in reality an outcast from the home and family of God, a wandering prodigal, with nothing left but husks to live upon, and nothing in prospect but inevitable, swift, irremediable ruin.

The indispensable necessity and paramount importance of love to Christ thus become emphatically manifest. We cannot in any condition please God, except as we are inspired and actuated in our performance of duty by the love of Christ. We cannot approach to God at all, except we love Christ as the way to the Father. We cannot love God except as revealed in Christ's person and work, and so in loving the Father, love the Son. We cannot love what God loves, except we love Christ, for God chiefly manifests Himself in loving His Son. And we cannot be fit for the fellowship of angels, except as we love Jesus; for the very existence of angels, as holy and happy creatures, is bound up and spent in their love to the Lamb that was slain, now the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

So indispensable is this love to Jesus, that nothing will serve as a substitute for it. We may have speculative knowledge. We may be regular in keeping up the forms of piety. We may be outwardly correct in character and life. Yet there may be no true love to Jesus in us. And

if so, under all our fair appearances, we are really dead to God, alienated from, enemies to Him.

Many fair professors of the gospel will not believe or feel this. They are ready to treat direct love to Jesus as a pretence or a delusion. They make religion to consist in the general belief of certain doctrines, and the outward practice of certain duties. Reliance on a personal Saviour, attachment to Him, and communion with Him, are, in their eyes, matters of imagination, not of actual experience.

But such love to Christ is not only a reality, it is an indispensable, all-important reality. Without this love to Him there can be no true religion in our heart or life. There can be no spiritual life in the soul without it. No true obedience can be rendered to the divine will without it. No service can be acceptably offered to God without it. Let men do what they may, they remain under the sore displeasure of God, so long as they are without love to Christ. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha."

Hence the character given of all who are chosen to salvation. Him having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. With their eyes of faith directed to Jesus, they see Him to be so full of all excellence in Himself, and so precious as a Saviour to them, that they cannot but love Him in such a manner as to spend their energies in showing forth His praise, to find their happiness in the contemplation of His glory, and to cherish the desire and hope of soon reaching the fulness of joy that awaits them in His presence.

V. The outgoings or evidences of this love to Christ or the ways in which it is shown. True earnest love finds out endless ways of showing itself toward its object. Such

as love Christ manifest their love to Him in many ways, such as the following—

Christ is the object of their supreme regard. He is in their eyes fairer than the sons of men.—They often think of Him; “I have set the Lord always before me.”¹—They live on Him by faith; “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”²—They long after His presence and favour; the desire of their soul is to Him and the remembrance of His name.³—There is no satisfaction to them like that which they derive from manifestations of His redeeming love; “I sat down under his shadow, with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.”⁴—They delight in His character, and endeavour after conformity to His image.—They would not have Christ to be less holy or less just than He is, any more than less gracious. They rejoice in the Lord, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.⁵—Instead of trying to find comfort in fancying Him to be such an one as themselves, they seek their peace as well as their safety in having their judgments, dispositions, habits, and whole character transformed into His likeness, in having thus the same mind in them that was in Christ.—They endeavour to “do those things that are pleasing in His sight,” saying, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” and showing that they are His friends by keeping His commandments.⁶—They mourn over those shortcomings and transgressions of heart, speech, and behaviour, by which they provoke Christ to withdraw or to remain at a distance from them. And when at any time on account of their sins He refuses

¹ Ps. xvi.

² Gal. ii.

³ Isa. xxvi.

⁴ Song ii.

⁵ Ps. xxx.

⁶ John xiv.

them access to His presence, they go about in sadness seeking till they find Him whom their soul loveth.—They cannot rest without some comfortable persuasion of His forgiveness and favour. And when visited with any evidence of His love, having found Him whom their soul loveth, they hold Him, and will not let Him go.—They covet and cultivate intimate acquaintance and communion with Him; desiring that to them, as friends, He would make known all things that He himself has heard of the Father.¹—They hear His voice and open the door of their heart to Him, as He stands knocking at it, that He may come into them and sup with them, and they with Him.²—They daily commend Him to others, testifying that His grace is precious, and inviting the sons of men to put their trust under the shadow of His wings.—They make His honour their chief concern. They love all that love Christ. Loving Him that begets children of God out of sinful men, they love those that are begotten of Him. They love all that are “born again.” “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” And they hate such as hate Him. They are grieved with and count as enemies such as rise up against Him.—Their love to Christ makes them ready to sacrifice everything for His sake. They count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord, that they may win Christ, and be found in Him.—They love as those who are waiting for Him from heaven. They look for His glorious appearing. They love it. They cherish the hope that when He appears, they shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is.—And they long and prepare to be finally and for ever blessed in His immediate presence. They would be absent from

¹ John xv.² Rev. iii.

the body and present with the Lord. They desire to enter into His joy, and to be for ever with Him among that multitudinous yet most orderly gathering of all angelic and redeemed creatures, who are assembled around His everlasting throne, to be for ever receiving all good from Him, and for ever magnifying His fulness who filleth all in all.

Practical reflections.

1. The love due from the redeemed to their Redeemer far exceeds all that they experience or exemplify while on earth.

When banished from his flock because of his faithfulness, Samuel Rutherford in his famous Letters gives utterance to many touching words on this subject. "O that this nation knew what is betwixt Christ and me; none would scare at His cross! I think aye the longer the better of my worthy and royal Master. . . . O when will we meet! O how long is it to the dawning of the marriage day! . . . O if He would fold the heavens together like an old cloak, and shovel time and days out of the way, and make ready in haste the Lamb's wife for her husband! . . . I am put to my wit's end how to get His name made great."

The Scriptures show how inadequately He is loved by even His most devoted servants.

"He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death; wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—"His name shall endure for ever! His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call

Him blessed.”—“ Whom having not seen ye love ; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing ; ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”—“ Thy name is as ointment poured forth ; therefore the virgins love thee. Draw me, we will run after thee. The King hath brought me into his chamber. We will be glad and rejoice in thee. Behold thou art fair, my love. Let me see thy countenance. Let me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. My beloved is mine, and I am his. Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south ; blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruit.”—“ Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood ; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.”—“ And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders ; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.” Words like these demonstrate that, as the love of Christ to His people has a length and breadth and height and depth that pass knowledge, so their most fervent love to Him must ever inadequately express the love that is due for that love wherewith He has loved them.

2. It is God only who by His Spirit given to them, im-

plants, and revives, and renders fruitful this love to Christ in the hearts of men.

Before the Spirit comes into any, taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to their minds, they satisfy themselves, as professors of religion, with a few outward forms of worship added to the outward and ordinary proprieties of life. Or if more earnest in religion, they still spend their strength on services that are prompted by, and that satisfy the merely natural tastes and feelings of the human heart.

When true and vital religion takes hold of any, it is God who has interposed in their case, to make them to see and feel, and to exemplify what true religion is. By a marvellous work of His Spirit upon their hearts, such it may be as were little esteemed in the church, or even in the world before, become at once alive to their sinful and miserable condition by nature and by practice, have Christ revealed to their understandings and hearts, and are at once led to Him, brought to His feet, as all their salvation and all their desire. From that hour of their earthly history, a true love to Christ, an enlightened, an all-absorbing, and a manifest love to Him, takes possession of their heart and governs their life. Like a divine fire kindled in their bosoms, this love to Christ burns up and reduces to ashes their formerly earthly and evil lusts and habits. This love to Christ flames up within them in heavenly fervours akin to those that fill the seraphim on high. In the exercise of this love they become illuminated with divine knowledge and fired with divine desires. This love to Christ, shining out in their character and conduct, casts a pure and brilliant light on the darkness of the surrounding world, and even of the surrounding church, a light too dazzling for the eyes of human philosophy, too pure and heavenly for the tastes of natural men. In the

light of this love to Jesus, simple and saintly converts who are the subjects of it are found to walk habitually, realising spiritual and eternal things, communing with one another, and having their fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. In the light of this love to Jesus, they especially look to, and contemplate Himself, receive from His fulness, acknowledge His claims, and live to advance His glory. By the praises, in which, with hearts full of love to Jesus, they unite together on the earth, they anticipate and prepare for the services and songs of heaven.

3. As an overwhelming reason for the continual prayer that this love to Christ may fill our life and govern our conduct, we ought to remember that it is the closest attainable resemblance to God Himself, in the highest manifestation of His perfections, and the very soul of all the moral excellence to be found in any of His intelligent creatures. This love to Christ is a true though faint likeness of that love which fills the heart of God toward His own Son. It is essentially the same love to Christ which angels and the redeemed in heaven cherish and express continually. It fills, in fact, the atmosphere which is breathed by the holy universe. This love of the saved to Jesus accordingly is present in the first movements of every divinely-quickened soul. It begins to be vented in the sighings of the broken and contrite heart. It fills the longings of every true and earnest suppliant. It is poured forth in the daily praises of glad believers. It nerves tempted saints to fight and vanquish all their foes. It urges the followers of the Lamb, when departing from time, to press through the dark valley, that they may close their eyes in death and open them in the presence of Jesus, and see Him as the King in His beauty in the land that is afar off. This love then leads each of the redeemed to take his place in the society of

the ransomed, and his part in their songs of everlasting joy. It also forms their introduction into the innumerable company of angels, to aid in swelling their seraphic anthems to the Lamb that was slain. Yea, their love to Jesus leads them up to the very throne of God and of the Lamb, to find their resting-place in the midst of the Father's glory, in closest fellowship with His eternal Son.

XVIII.

RELATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER TO HIS DEATH AND HIS SECOND COMING.

“Till He come.”—I COR. xi. 26.

IN the supper, christians celebrate the death of Christ till He come. They commemorate the sufferings of His first advent, and anticipate the consequent glory of the second.

In the supper, they show His death. They proclaim it. They publish it as that of a sufferer of infinite dignity; of, in fact, the incarnate God. They publish it as really undergone in our nature, and as the completion of a life of inexpressible humiliation and endurance by a death of unparalleled and inconceivable ignominy and agony. They proclaim His death as that true and proper atonement for sin by which the justice of God is satisfied for the offences of all who believe; His anger is turned away from them, and all His perfections are harmonised and glorified in their present and everlasting salvation. In the supper, believers proclaim the death of Christ as the central fact of that great work of redemption which more than all the other works of God reveal His existence as the Three-One God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They celebrate His death as the only key to the whole providential government of God over this and other worlds. They celebrate it as the foundation of all the mediatorial relationships, offices, and works which Christ sustained and performed before He became incarnate, and during His abode on earth, and which He still sustains and performs as the ascended, ever-living,

ever-reigning intercessor and King. They proclaim His death as the source of all their blessings for the present, and of their hopes for the future, as that which gives to ordinances all their value, as that which furnishes the most powerful motives to every duty, and shall form the theme of their everlasting praise. And in the supper, believers publish the death of Christ as now exercising a supremely blissful influence throughout the holy and happy universe, and a not less decisive power in determining the destiny of the doomed portions of creation, and as in fact bringing all things, literally and absolutely all things, under subjection to Christ. Thus, in the supper, christians show His death.

But while christians thus publish the death of Jesus in the supper, it is said here, with special emphasis, that they do so in connection with His second advent. They show His death, "till He come." That is, in the supper they show His death as those who are avowedly looking for His second coming, and who connect with His final advent the death which He died upon the cross. The relation of the death of Christ to His second coming, as set forth in the ordinance of the supper, is the subject to which attention for a little is now solicited. And,

I. To those who show the Lord's death in the supper, it is a pledge from God of the certainty of Christ's second coming.

God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead. As the rainbow in the heavens is a pledge to all who see it, and who know the word of God, that He will never again destroy the world with a flood, so the Lord's supper is a pledge to all believers

that their Lord will come again in person to this earth. As He was not entombed for ever in the sepulchre in which He lay, as His life was not left in the grave, so neither shall He remain for ever hidden from His people's eyes within the veil that separates Him at present from their view, the veil that separates His present dwelling-place from this world. It is recorded in scripture¹ that "Jesus led His disciples out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them: and it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Of the certainty of His coming, as well as of the fact of His resurrection, which is inseparably connected with it, the Lord's supper is a continual and impressive pledge. It is a pledge that God will send Jesus Christ, although the heavens must receive Him until the time of the restitution of all things.

II. In showing the Lord's death in the supper, His people proclaim their own desires and hopes of His coming.

They thus proclaim their confident expectation of His second advent. They specially remember at such a season the words of Paul,² "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." While sitting at His table and partaking of it, they are constrained to say within themselves, As surely as we are now at the table of our Lord, and in His presence partaking of these symbols of His broken body and shed blood, so

¹ Luke xxiv. ; Acts i.

² Col. iii. 4.

surely shall we see Him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And the feelings of their hearts find utterance in the language of the loved disciple, "Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."¹ Their anticipations of the Redeemer's advent are thus rendered livelier, and more abiding, and more influential than before. And so as regards the confidence with which they are led at His table, to cherish and express their expectations of His coming, believers, so often as they eat bread and drink wine in the supper, show their Lord's death till He come.

III. The Lord's supper in showing the Lord's death is a lasting, and constantly repeated announcement, a proclamation through all ages of His second coming.

It is a perpetual commemoration of His death, and a perpetual pledge of His glorious appearing, even until He actually rends the heavens and comes down. Were it given up even for a limited period, were it for any reason even but temporarily set aside, one great end of its appointment would be sacrificed, viz., that of a constant, as well as enduring testimony to the church and to the world, both of the Redeemer's death, which is past, and of His second advent which is still to happen. Other ordinances serve each their special purposes, and so does this emphatically. Thus the weekly christian sabbath is a memorial of the resurrection of Christ, and a pledge of eternal rest to His true followers. Baptism is the memorial of their own resurrection to a spiritual life in union with their risen Lord. And the supper is a memorial of His having come in humiliation, and a pledge of His speedy coming in glory.

¹ Rev. i.

As the memorial of His death which is the spring of all their hopes, and as the pledge of His second coming when their hopes are to be fulfilled, the Lord's supper is to be continued, and will, by christians, continue to be carefully and gladly celebrated until all the hopes awakened by His death are consummated by His return. So that, both by the will of God and by the glad consent of christians, this ordinance shall continue to be observed to the end. Already for nearly two thousand years the faithful followers of Christ have upheld it more or less carefully in its expressive simplicity. To observe it has been their chief delight in all their varied conditions. Sometimes they have been reduced to a feeble persecuted remnant. But even in their most afflicted condition, even when hunted like partridges on the mountains, and forced to fly to the solitudes and wildernesses, to the dens and caves of the earth, even then they have, with more comfort and gladness than at other seasons, partaken of the supper, at once clinging to the cross as their safety in times of trouble, and rejoicing in hope of the rest to which they found themselves hastening in the manifested presence of Christ. And in the more peaceful and prosperous states of the church, this ordinance has ever been to believers the chief and cherished means of leading them back to that death from which their mercies flow, and forward to that appearing of their Lord, at which they shall appear with Him in glory. Yea, and even when the church is at length brought into its promised state of hitherto unexampled light and blessedness, the seasons of communion in the supper shall be those at which, above all others, the King shall bring His people into His banqueting house, and spread over them the banner of His love, and make them to sit beneath His shadow with great delight, and render the fruits of His death sweet to their taste, and fill them with bright and blessed visions of the splendours

in which He is Himself to be revealed, and of the exceeding and eternal glory that shall then be theirs. It is thus that the unceasing celebrations of the supper through successive ages till the end of time, are destined to be the means of keeping up the remembrance of Jesus' death and the prospect of His final appearing, until the very day when He is beheld coming with clouds, and the saints with trembling joy exclaim, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will rejoice and be glad in His salvation."

IV. As the showing of the Lord's death till He comes provides for the perpetual observance of this ordinance through all ages even till the end, this provision again secures that there shall always be a church on earth to keep up the remembrance of the Redeemer's death, and the prospect of His coming, until His final appearing as the Judge of all.

The death of Christ is to be shown in the supper till He comes. There will therefore always be a church upon the earth for this end, as well as for other purposes. The perpetuation of the church of Christ on earth is thus a great truth proved and published by this ordinance. Other kingdoms shall perish, but this kingdom of Christ shall endure. Other nations shall cease to be; but this holy nation shall remain till time has run its course. Eighteen hundred years ago the institutions and festivals of the Roman empire were filling the world with the reports and manifestations of its power and splendour, and looked in the eyes of men as if destined to continue through all coming ages, proclaiming Rome's imperial greatness indestructible. These institutions and festivals have, however, long since ceased to exist, and the dominion which they proclaimed has long since perished from "the eternal city."

But the supper of the Lord, instituted then in an upper chamber in Jerusalem, and observed by a few humble followers of One who, while presiding in the midst of them, seemed more helpless than themselves, and emphatically a man of sorrows, is still kept with even greater freshness and power than when it was first appointed and observed. Yea, and when all the present institutions and works of men, and all the exhibitions of human power and pomp that claim and get so high a place among mankind, and look so likely to endure, have finally passed away, and the very memory of most of them has perished, this simple yet sublime ordinance shall continue, yea, shall be much more widely and lovingly observed than ever, and shall be much more powerful in regard of the glorious blessings with which it is fraught to the nations of the saved. It is almost certain that not one of all those works of man, in which the world at present glories, shall survive till the end of time, and that though it is to be the same earth, it shall be other works of man that are then to be burned up. There can be little doubt, that, amidst the changes continually passing over human greatness to mark its vanity, other characters and other institutions than those which are now in vogue shall take their place, and live their little hour while time is running out. But one thing shall continue the same both in substance and in form, and that is the supper of the Lord; so that the last company of believers that the earth is destined to contain shall assuredly sit at this table, as we now sit at it, or as the first disciples sat at it eighteen hundred years ago. And all this implies the perpetual continuance of the church by which the supper is observed. It implies that there shall never be wanting a people to obey the command, "Do this in remembrance of me," up to the moment when He shall be seen coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

V. In showing the Lord's death in the supper till He comes, christians proclaim the connection between the death of Christ and His second coming.

His humiliation and exaltation are united as closely as are cause and effect. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him.¹ For the suffering of death, He is crowned with glory and honour.² In his vision of the providential government of all things, Ezekiel saw an appearance as of a man upon the eternal throne.³ Daniel, too, saw one like the Son of man come to the Ancient of days and receive from Him universal dominion.⁴ John saw Him "in the midst of the throne, as a Lamb that had been slain," and again, as One clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, with the name written on it, "King of kings and Lord of lords."⁵ Everything said in Scripture of Jesus' exaltation asserts or implies that it flows from His present humiliation. But a great part of His exaltation consists in His second coming, and in the work of judgment which He will then perform. And so while in the supper we commemorate His death and anticipate His coming, we are to connect the two events, and to remember that He shall come because He died. He died to redeem His people with the great price of His precious blood; and He shall come to complete their redemption by His almighty power. He died to purchase for them the heavenly inheritance, and therefore He shall come again publicly to put them in possession of it, and to take them to Himself, that where He is, there they may also be.

VI. In showing in the supper the death of Christ till

¹ Phil. ii.

³ Ezek. i.

⁵ Rev. xix.

² Heb. ii.

⁴ Dan. vii.

He come, the contrast is proclaimed between the meanness of His first advent and the majesty of the second.

He came in outward meanness; He is coming with infinite glory. He came as a child born and as a Son given; He is coming as the mighty God. He came with marred visage and wasted form; He is coming with a countenance like the sun when shining in its strength. When here before, a few obscure persons were all the followers whom He had on earth; when He comes again, His retinue shall be the hosts of heaven. When He came before, few would listen to His voice; when He comes again, all who are in their graves shall hear it. When He came before, He was despised and rejected of men; when He comes again, all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. He came before to stand at the bar of earthly rulers; He shall come again to fill the great white throne, and to bring all mankind before His judgment-seat. He came before to be condemned and crucified; He is coming now as the Lord of all worlds, and the universal dispenser of life and death to the righteous and the wicked.

VII. In showing, in the supper, the Lord's death till He come, believers contemplate and publish the great and decisive ends and designs of His second coming. What are these ends and designs?

1. He is coming to manifest His glory. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels."¹ "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."²

2. He is coming to sit in judgment on all mankind. "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ;"³ "that every one may receive the things done in his body,

¹ Matt. xvi.

² Matt. xxiv.

³ Rom. xiv.

according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”¹ Nothing shall then escape His inspection. God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.² “All the churches shall know that I am He who searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”³ He will then effectually separate between the good and the evil, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and welcome the former to His kingdom, and send the latter into everlasting fire.⁴

3. In particular, He is coming to complete the salvation of His people, and to present them to Himself at length as a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Much is implied in this complete salvation of the redeemed. The following among other things is implied in it.

(1.) Sin is then extinguished in their nature. They are made holy as the Lord is holy. They are made like to Christ as both the condition and the consequence of seeing Him as He is. Their very bodies come forth from their graves at His voice, leaving all their corruption behind them. So that, standing over the graves, from which they have been raised, they sing in triumph, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? With that prospect, they now look for the Saviour from heaven, to change their vile body, and fashion it like to His glorious body.⁵

(2.) They are freed not only from sin, but from all the evils that flow from sin. Thus, *First*, guilty fear ceases from their bosom. All their doubtings are done away. They have confidence, and are not ashamed before Him at His coming.⁶ There is nothing left in their nature to be ashamed of, or to hide from His inspection. *Second*, all

¹ 2 Cor. v.² Rom. ii.³ Rev. ii.⁴ Matt. xxv.⁵ Phil. iii.⁶ 1 John ii.

their liabilities to bodily want, disease, and pain are gone. In that land to which the Redeemer has come to conduct them, the inhabitants never say they are sick. *Third*, they are finally freed from the presence of the wicked. Delivered at length from all their oppressors, they lift up their heads in triumph. They escape from under every cloud of calumny in that day of the manifestation of the sons of God. They have no further contact or connection with the wicked. Between themselves and the condemned a great gulf is for ever fixed. *Fourth*, they are then also finally freed from all further temptations of the wicked one, who harassed and hung upon them to the last. *Fifth*, and then, too, all further connection with this disordered and ensnaring world is terminated: for the earth itself is burned up; and in its place they have prepared for them the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

(3.) While freed from sin, and all its effects, whatever is good but still imperfect in their present character and circumstances is then completed, or is succeeded by what is more adapted to their perfected condition. Thus—

[1.] Gracious affections and experiences suited to their present state of sin, infirmity, and trial, are supplanted by other and higher affections and experiences. For faith terminates in sight, and hope in actual enjoyment, and the sighings of penitential sorrow in songs of unmingled and unceasing gladness.

[2.] Ordinances of grace, too, such as are suited to the present state, and precious to the souls of believers, are succeeded by higher ordinances adapted to their glorified condition. Thus, *First*, the weekly sabbath, the day of blessing, having served its holy purposes on earth, is succeeded by the sabbath that never ends. *Second*, the earthly temple, the habitation of God's house, so justly

loved by all the saints, is exchanged for the everlasting temple, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. *Third*, the joyful sound that so long issued from the silver trumpet of a preached gospel, to cheer the faithful from age to age, is now succeeded by the far more thrilling words with which the myriads on high for ever stir each other up to give to God the glory due, and to enjoy His manifested presence. Yea, the gospel's joyful sound is now succeeded by the voice of mingled majesty and love, with which, like the sound of many waters, Jehovah-Jesus speaks to His redeemed from the midst of the everlasting throne. *Fourth*, the language of confession and of prayer and supplication in which believers now pour forth their feelings anent their unworthiness and destitution, and their longing desires of grace, is succeeded by the language of continual adoration and thanksgiving. *Fifth*, the feeble notes of praise that at present ascend from the untuned and broken harps of the church below, are succeeded by the alleluias that proceed from the golden harps of the church above. *Sixth*, the rite of baptism, the solemn sign of sanctifying grace, is no longer needed: for all partakers of that grace are for ever full of the Holy Ghost, and of the life which flows from His indwelling. *Seventh*, even the most solemn and blissful of all gospel ordinances, the supper of the Lord, in which believers feast so sensibly on Christ and on His benefits to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, is also done away. The table of the Lord, so long spread for His people in the wilderness, is at length removed. The banner that so long waved over the followers of Jesus is at length folded together and laid aside. The loving commandment, "Do this in remembrance of me," is at length recalled. The holy ordinance, so long associated with innumerable blissful recollections in the minds of myriads of the redeemed, is now succeeded

by a still more glorious feast, the marriage supper of the Lamb.

That marriage supper of the Lamb awaiting the redeemed at the coming of their Lord, is to be enjoyed in a more spacious temple than any made with human hands. They pass into the new Jerusalem, through precious gates of pearl which look in all directions, stand open day and night, and have inscribed on them the names of all the ransomed of the Lord in token of their right of entrance. Within the precincts of that holy city, feelings of perfect safety reign; for its walls are great and high, and rest on sure foundations. Its vast dimensions furnish abundant room for the myriads of the redeemed. Order and harmony prevail throughout its golden streets. The continual manifestations of the divine presence fill that "perfection of beauty" with uncreated light, in the midst of which is seen the throne of God and of the Lamb. No evil is ever felt or dreaded there. The dwellers there are constantly refreshed by the river of life that is flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and they are nourished by the fruit of the tree of life that groweth on its banks. The eternal Spirit fills them by His indwelling with all knowledge, holiness, and joy. And they live upon the perfections of the divine nature displayed for ever before their eyes in the person and work of God their Saviour. There they have perpetual and near communion with God; for they see Him face to face, and His name is written on their forehead. There they live as heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Yea, each is dealt with as a son of God. Yea, they are unto God as a bride adorned for her husband. Yea, they are treated as the Lamb's wife. Yea, they are one with God Himself, being partakers of the divine nature. And so they enter into a blessedness which no tongue can tell or heart imagine.

With anticipations like these such as love Christ are encouraged to show His death in the supper, till He come. When He at length appears, the satisfaction which they have experienced at His table shall be perfected in their joy at His appearing. The defective services of the sanctuary below shall be exchanged for the perfect services of the sanctuary above. Their present state of comparative distance and even exile from God, shall be succeeded by fulness of joy in His presence, and pleasures at His right hand for evermore. Instead of the mixed company met with at the table of the Lord on earth, only Christ-like guests shall be found in the communion of the church above. Instead of the limited and fleeting comfort derived from short and passing seasons of communion here, the feast of salvation at which they meet in the immediate presence of their Lord on high, shall never terminate, the table which He spreads for them in the everlasting kingdom shall never be removed.

4. One other design and result of His looked-for advent is kept in view and published by christians in showing at His table their Lord's death till He come, and that is, His purpose then to destroy His enemies, even all that know not God, and obey not the gospel of His Son.

This destruction of the enemies of Christ is necessary to vindicate the holiness of that God, with whom evil shall not dwell; for otherwise He could not be the object of the reverence, love, and confidence of such as love and serve Him. Besides, if anything defiled and defiling were allowed to enter heaven, it would no longer be loved and looked to by the children of God as their everlasting dwelling-place. The present mixture of saints and sinners, of good and evil, in even the most sacred meetings of the saints on earth, helps to hide the glory of the Lord, and to restrain His favour from His people, and so to render their present

happiness incomplete. It is only when all evil is finally shut out of His presence and kingdom, that their happiness is perfect. And therefore anticipating His advent as the signal for the final expulsion of all the workers of iniquity from His presence and kingdom, believers at His table show His death till He come.

Practical reflections.

FIRST. What a solemn call communicants as such have to thorough sincerity and earnestness in the service of Christ.

They are, confessedly, soon to stand in His presence, and at His judgment-seat, and to find Him who is now searching their hearts and trying their reins, giving to them individually according to their works. No merely outward connection with His church and ordinances will then be of any service. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision will be of any avail, but only a new creation, in virtue of which they are the workmanship of God created anew in Christ unto good works. It will be of no avail to any in that day to have had abundant means of grace, and to have merely attended on them. "When once the Master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall

sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.”¹

No human being, whatever His profession, or his place among the guests at the table of the Lord, or even in the offices of the church, if seen by Christ as wilfully practising iniquity in his life or regarding it in his heart, shall abide the searching judgment of that day; for the Lord Jesus shall then bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of all hearts. When the Shepherd comes, He will divide the goats from the sheep. When the Husbandman comes, He will separate the tares from the wheat. When the Master builder comes, he will disentangle and consume the wood, hay, and stubble that have been mixed up with the gold, silver, and precious stones. When the divine Bridegroom comes, He will shut out the graceless sleepers from His marriage supper, and cast out the intruders who have entered among the welcome guests. When the Judge comes, He will discern between the righteous and the wicked, between them that serve God and them that serve Him not. Who, then, shall abide the day of His coming? Who shall stand when He appeareth? None but those in whom He now works, and over whom He now sits as a refiner and purifier, to purge them in the furnace from the dross of sin, and to promote and watch over the progress of His sanctifying work in their heart and life, until He sees His own holy image reflected from their character.

Hence the need of thorough deep sincerity and earnestness on the part of those who sit at His table, showing His death till He come. Everything sinful must be condemned and cast out of them if they would not be condemned with

¹ Luke xiii.

the world. They must see to it that they are not intruders whom He already frowns upon and will at last reject, but friends whom He welcomes to His table now, and whom He shall at last receive among the ransomed in the Zion that is above.

SECOND. In showing at His table the Lord's death till He come, believers have at the same time a cheering call to regard His coming with hope.

His coming indeed will be awful to such as mock at the promise of it; for it will surprise them as a thief in the night, and while they are saying Peace, peace, it will bring destruction upon them, from which they cannot escape. His coming will be awful also for careless professors who, while the Lord seems to delay His coming, meanwhile serve the world and sin, and who, when the cry is raised, "The Bridegroom cometh!" shall find themselves fatally unprepared to meet Him. But even to His own people the coming of Christ is apt to be a cause of misgivings and fears. They think of Him coming with clouds, in great power and glory, with myriads of angels, with the trump of God, calling the dead out of their graves, gathering all mankind before His great white throne, and judging them out of the books of His law, and of their own memory, and conscience, and disposing of them according to their works; and the prospect is apt to fill them with anxiety and fear. Especially when their faith is weak and their sense of sin is strong, their heart is ready to sink within them as they anticipate that solemn and decisive day.

In the midst of the apprehensions and misgivings felt even by christians at the prospect of the second coming of their Lord, no season and no circumstances are more likely to fill them with calm and hopeful anticipations of it, than when at His table they show His death till He come. His sufferings thus commemorated speak to them with great

force of a love that cannot die, a love which many waters cannot drown. His people are then specially reminded by Him of the love with which, having loved them from the beginning, He loves them to the end. They remember that it is sinners for whom He agonised and died, that He is coming to gather into His presence as the fruit of the travail of His soul. To such as are looking and cleaving to Him, and found in Him by faith, there is now no condemnation. Of such as in and through Himself are seeking to have, and to make evident, their place in the divine family, He is prepared to say at last, Behold I and the children whom thou hast given me. Yielding themselves up to Him at His table, they are ready to say, He that hath begun a good work in me, will perform it until the day of Christ, and so make me to be like Him when I see Him as He is. This bread and wine lead me to Christ as the life of my soul; and when He who is my life shall appear, I shall appear with Him in glory. I hear Him saying now, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved;" and may I not expect to hear Him saying then, "Come, ye blessed of my Father"? He hath brought me into His banqueting house; He will bring me to His marriage supper. I sit under His shadow with delight; I shall find in His presence fulness of joy. I am now ready to confess Him before men; He will then confess me before His Father and the angels. I am resolved to abide the tribulations in the world that are the portion of those who serve Him; and He will take me then to the place which He has gone to prepare for His faithful followers in His Father's house of many mansions. If we stand fast by His cause in a day of rebuke and trouble, He will give us a place by His side in the day of His final triumph. If we own Him in His humiliation, He will own us in His exaltation. If we rejoice when counted worthy to suffer shame for His name,

He will rejoice in addressing us, "Well done, good and faithful servant." In short, if He is all and in all to us as our merciful and almighty Redeemer, we shall find Him at last our gracious Judge.

Such sentiments and feelings are the natural outcome of the due celebration of the Lord's supper when, at His table, His true followers show His death till He come. And so it is at such a season and in such circumstances that they are specially called, and enabled to anticipate His coming with cheering hope, as an event thus divested of its terrors, and looked forward to with a measure of calmness and of comfort, and even of holy trembling joy.

THIRD. In showing at His table the Lord's death till He come, they have what should prove to them a powerful call to a present life of holiness and new obedience. If they show His death at His table, they will bear about with them in their body His dying, that His life may be manifest in their body. They have their conversation in heaven who are looking for the Saviour from thence. If they show His death till He come, they will be diligent, that when He comes they may be found of Him without spot and blameless. If looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and their Saviour Jesus Christ, they will by His grace be taught to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world. The prospect of His coming will render them instant in season and out of season, as in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and kingdom. They may well be stirred up to all good works by the recompense to be then bestowed upon them. "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered

to the saints, and do minister." "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom. . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." No service, even to the giving of a cup of cold water to a disciple, because he is a disciple, shall then lose its reward. Not a sigh of penitence now escapes from the lips of believers, but shall then be turned into a song of praise. Not a groan issues from their burdened hearts, while labouring to make their requests known unto God, but shall then be turned into a higher note of thankful praise for having been made more than conquerors through Him that loved them. Not a trial of their faith is now taking place, but shall then be found to honour and praise and glory at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such as now suffer for Him shall then reign with Him. Such as watch in all things, endure afflictions, live to Christ and are ready to die for Him, fight the good fight, and keep the faith, till they finish their course, shall then receive at His hands the crown of righteousness.¹ Such as now endure persecutions and tribulations with patience and faith, shall then be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, and be recompensed with rest when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven.² And all the followers of the Lamb who, whatever be their outward condition, are careful in all circumstances to abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, shall find their hearts established unblamable before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.³ The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Seeing, then, that all

¹ 2 Tim. iv.² 2 Thes. i.³ 1 Thes. iii.

these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.¹

¹ 2 Pet. iii.

XIX.

THE SONG OF THE REDEEMED, OF ANGELS, AND OF EVERY CREATURE.

“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials, full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood,” &c.—REV. v. 8-13.

THE context records the vision which John the apostle had of heaven. The first sight that attracted his attention was the throne of God. Upon the throne he saw a glorious appearance betokening the presence of the Deity, although in that glory there was no personal form to be seen: for still, as ever, no man hath seen God at any time. At the same time, the throne was encircled by a rainbow, the emblem of covenanted mercy; to denote that while God dwells in glory unapproachable, He reigns in love. Seated around the throne were twenty-four elders, representatives of the whole church of God, clothed in white raiment, and wearing golden crowns. From the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunders, and voices, tokens of God's awful majesty and righteous judgments. Seven lamps of fire burned before the throne, emblems of the Eternal Spirit, and of His work as the Enlightener, Sanctifier, Guide, and Comforter of all believers. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal, denoting probably the calmness and unchangeableness of the heavenly state. Nearest to the throne were four living

creatures, resembling respectively, a lion, a calf, the face of a man, and a flying eagle; each furnished with six wings, and full of eyes within; and they rested not day or night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come;" these four creatures representing, as it would seem, the ministers of Jesus, who are bold, patient, intelligent, and active in His service. As if in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, John saw a book, or parchment-roll, full of writing within, but carefully sealed with seven seals; the record of God's purposes and arrangements with reference to the future history of the church, throughout the whole course of time, and until it is finally established in its everlasting state. An angel was heard with loud voice proclaiming, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" When no creature was found worthy of the honour, John wept with sorrow. But his feelings were speedily relieved. For one of the elders told him that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, had prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof. John could not fail to recognise in this description the once humbled and lowly and now exalted One, with whom he had been so intimate in the days of His flesh. And his eyes were immediately blessed with a sight of his divine Redeemer. For he beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne. And His doing so was the signal for the commencement of those adorations of God and of Christ which are to form a leading part of the employments of heaven. The four living creatures, representing the ministers of Jesus, and the twenty-four elders, repre-

sending the whole of the redeemed, begin the praise. The angels, in countless numbers, then unite their voices with the ransomed of the Lord. And the spirit thus wakened spreads throughout the works of God, till all creation joins in the glorious concert, and the universal chorus fills the boundless and everlasting kingdom of Jehovah. When Jesus took His place on the mediatorial throne, and commenced His work of revealing and executing the Father's purposes, these ascriptions of praise began. As He carries forward His work, these ascriptions of praise proportionately increase. When it is finished, they will be rendered universally and for ever.

John says that he saw and heard the universe thus adoring God and the Lamb, when Christ commenced His mediatorial reign: and no doubt these praises did then begin to be rendered to Him. Yet it is evident that what he witnessed was rather a representation of what shall follow the completion of Christ's mediatorial work. The scene which he beheld is rather what is to happen at the conclusion of this world's history, than what has already taken place. Things are tending to the happy state anticipated; but they have not yet reached it. Even in heaven the souls under the altar are still crying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?¹ Creation around us still groans beneath the burdens by which it is oppressed through sin. It still travails in pain as if racked with sore disorders. The sun still grudges to shine on this polluted world. The moon proceeds on her nightly course as if she felt it vain to repeat to this listless world the wondrous story of her birth. The brow of nature is still furrowed with care. Her wan and withered face still marks a deeply

¹ Rev. vi.

seated disease within her constitution, that is preying on her vitals. The earth is still cursed with barrenness, consumed with heat, blighted with cold, covered with gloom, rent with earthquakes, laid waste with desolating storms. Worse than all this, mankind too generally are still without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world. Contemptible and malignant idols receive their homage. Impure passions fill their hearts. Vicious practices defile their lives. Their language is the language of profaneness and of blasphemy. Their songs are songs of revelry and lewdness. Their life is spent in the indulgence of fleshly lusts. They are a world of sinners lying in the wicked one. And their end is to perish in their own corruption. Amid this scene of horrid disorder and wild uproar, indeed, praise is faintly heard ascending to Jesus daily, from believing and gracious souls; and the earth anticipates with hope, while it looks with longing for its coming deliverance from the presence of the wicked and the defilements of sin, and for the gladsome light and liberty into which it shall then be brought.

But mighty events both blissful and terrible must occur, before the praises spoken of here are being actually and fully rendered. In order therefore to realise in any degree the true ultimate meaning and reference of these words, we must imagine ourselves transported beyond the bounds of all time, and placed among the final arrangements of the eternal world. The whole multitude for whom Christ died have been at length actually redeemed, and the number of the elect thus made up. The number of the wicked is also completed. The great day of judgment is over. Christ has come in His glory, and raised the millions of the dead, and separated the righteous from the wicked, and welcomed the righteous to His kingdom, and shut up the wicked in hell. The heavens have passed away with a great noise.

The elements have melted with fervent heat. The earth and its works have been burned up. From amidst the ruins of the visible creation, a new heaven and a new earth have started into being, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Heaven and earth, for ever freed from the presence of wicked men and fallen spirits, and purified from all sin, have become the beautiful and blissful dwelling-place of the one family of saints and angels. Creation has assumed the form of a great and glorious temple. In the midst of it is beheld Jehovah's everlasting throne. Upon that throne the Three-One God is manifesting His special presence in the midst of the sight-consuming splendours that betoken at once His spotless holiness, and enduring mercy, and the immutability of His kingdom. In the midst of the throne is seen conspicuous the person of the incarnate Saviour, as one who had once been crucified but is now crowned with glory and honour. Around Him are gathered all His ransomed people, a multitude whom no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, washed in His blood from all sin, and arrayed in bright unspotted righteousness. Encircling the redeemed, are innumerable hosts of angels. And beyond them again the face of redeemed and renovated nature stretches far away on every side.

Not only are the purposes and counsels of God declared; they are actually accomplished. The work of revealing and of executing these designs, entrusted to Jesus as the reward of His obedience unto death, has been carried forward by Him to completion. All the intelligent and holy creatures of God are assembled to survey and magnify this work of grace, and truth, and power, and the blessed One by whom it has been finished. And so the songs of praise begin, in which all the great portions of the universe perform their respective parts. The redeemed, as well becomes them, lead

the way. The angels follow. The whole creation joins in concert. And each burst of adoration and of thanksgiving is concluded by the affecting amen of the redeemed, and by their own peculiar adoration of the Ever-living One.

I. Observe the part performed by the redeemed.

They disclaim all merit in themselves and one another, and acknowledge their conscious unworthiness by "falling down before the Lamb." They at the same time give all honour to Christ, saying, "Thou art worthy." They have no fear of detracting from the Father's glory, by the homage which they render to the Son; on the contrary, they honour the Son as the way of honouring the Father also. They adore the Saviour for submitting to death at the hands of wicked men: "Thou wast slain." They adore Him for suffering the just for the unjust that He might bring them unto God: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." They adore Him especially as having not only provided in His obedience unto death a true and proper atonement for them, but as having put them in possession of all its benefits: "Thou hast redeemed us unto God." Having purchased us at so great a price, Thou didst in Thine own time and way deliver us by Thy mighty power. In virtue of what Thou didst suffer for us, the wrath of God was taken away, and His forgiveness extended to all our sins. We were under the condemning sentence of the law; and it was cancelled. We were under the fears of a guilty conscience; and Thy blood sprinkled on it gave us peace. We were captives of the wicked one; and when the strong man armed kept us as his goods in peace, Thou the stronger than he didst come upon him and spoil him of his goods. We were immersed in earthliness; and Thou didst come and deliver us from an evil world. We were enslaved by sin; and Thou didst come and break our fetters, free us from

the bondage of corruption, and introduce us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. We were exposed to many evils in the world, to disappointments and crosses, to fierce temptations and fiery trials, to manifold diseases and sore be-reavements, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever; and Thou didst ward off these evils from us, or sustain us under them, and sanctify them for our good, and in due time redeem us from them all, and place us in this happy world, where there is no more sorrow, or crying, or sin, or pain; and where there is no more curse. We were often borne down by sorrow as we travelled through the vale of tears; but Thou hast removed our sorrows, dried up our tears, attuned our hearts to praise Thee, and put into our hands these golden harps. We had many a sore struggle with spiritual foes; and Thou hast enabled us at length to overcome them all by Thy blood and by the word of Thy testimony, and made us more than conquerors, and given into our hands these palms of victory. We were long the polluted servants of sin, and Thou hast purged our sins away, and clothed us in these sacred robes of white, and privileged us to bear these golden censers with burning incense before the throne, and made us priests to the Eternal. We were the self-degraded tools and victims of our spiritual enemies, and Thou hast delivered us out of their hands, and lifted our heads in triumph over them, and raised us to a share in Thine own glory, and placed upon our heads these golden crowns, and made us kings to God. Worthy art Thou of our unceasing praises; and they shall be for ever rendered to Thee, O Thou that wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.

They also adore the Saviour for their countless numbers, and varied, eventful histories. "Thou hast redeemed us out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." More or fewer among these redeemed hosts lived before the

flood; and having, by faith in the promised seed, presented acceptable sacrifices unto God, and walked with Him, and pleased Him, while on earth, were early brought to glory. Others lived in patriarchal times, had the gospel even then preached to them, saw afar off, with gladness, the day of Christ, embraced the promises, became pilgrims on earth, and long since reached the heavenly country. A conspicuously honoured section of this vast society are the chosen portion of the ancient people; among whom are those who, through grace, were rendered guileless Israelites, holy prophets, faithful priests, and pious monarchs, who died in hope of the Messial's coming: among whom, too, are found even a number who joined in crucifying the Lord of glory, and yet were afterwards brought to repentance, and saved through the blood which their hands had shed: among whom also are multitudes who, after long rejecting Jesus, and heaping dishonour on Him, and suffering grievously for their sins, were brought by wonderful dealings of the Lord Jesus, to open their eyes upon His glory, and wash away their sins in His blood, and submit to Him as their King, and enjoy His presence among them in their recovered land, and, as His ministers, carry the unsearchable riches of His grace to all the ends of the habitable world. Among the redeemed are great numbers who, in successive ages downwards from apostolic times, were made the true children of God, in what were called christian lands. Here, also, are found manifold companies of those who dwelt in the dark places of the earth that were full of the habitations of cruelty, but were saved from becoming, like their fathers, victims of debasing and cruel superstition and idolatry, and turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. Here are those who were brought out of the spiritual Babylon, and saved from partaking of her plagues: and those who saw

through the delusions of the false prophet, and embraced Him who is the only Light of the world; and those who were delivered from the dreariness of infidelity, and led to believe in God and in His Son Jesus Christ. Among them are many who heard the gracious call, when the Lord said to the North, Give up; and to the South, Keep not back; bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth. In this society are found many who were once slothful, sensual inhabitants of sultry climes, but are now spiritual and active worshippers in this great temple. Here are once wild wanderers of the desert, now become holy and peaceful dwellers in the presence of their brethren, and in the house of their God. Here are once degraded, enslaved, and wretched sons of Africa, now enjoying the heavenly light, the moral dignity, and the glorious freedom of the sons of God. Here are found those who were once among the fiercest of the human race, but are now gentle followers of the Lamb, following Him whithersoever He goeth, and loving members of His holy and happy family. Among the myriads are found a few of the wise and mighty and noble of the earth, who were led by grace to kiss the Son and serve Him; but far more of the foolish, the weak, and the base, who have been taken from the dunghill, and made kings and priests unto God. Here are those who were sanctified from the womb, and those who were born again out of due time. Here are such as were to a great degree preserved from the defilements of earth, and prodigals who were received on returning from their fearful wanderings. Here are persecutors who were changed into devoted friends and promoters of the cause of God; and here, conspicuous, stand the company of Christ's confessors, who suffered shame and torture and death for their testimony to Jesus, and now wear the crown of martyrdom. Here are those who, from being most pol-

luted sinners, publicans, and harlots, were washed and justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God, and are now among the brightest, holiest monuments of redeeming grace and love. Here are multitudes of God's hidden ones, of whom nothing was known until the day of the manifestation of the sons of God. Here are those who on earth were known as aged believers, and tender youths, desolate widows, and fatherless children, who have each a wondrous tale to tell of all the way by which they were led to their holy and happy home. Two vast multitudes more will be found in this assembly of the redeemed: for here are the countless numbers who, in the days of millennial light, scarcely knew the pangs of the second birth, or the struggles of the life of faith, but passed with ease from death to life, and lived in comfort, and gently fell asleep in Jesus: and here are myriads of blessed infants, who, before they knew the miseries of actual sin, were washed in the Redeemer's blood, and renewed by His grace, and taken in mercy from the world to constitute a bright and beautiful portion of Christ's glorious kingdom.

But time would fail to tell, it will require eternity itself to unfold the varied characters, circumstances, and histories of those who form the church triumphant. When, therefore, they survey their own boundless assembly, and think of the mercy shown to each of those who compose it, while others of their fellow-creatures on earth, not less promising, it may be outwardly far more promising than they, were left to perish; and when they look to the Blessed One, to the virtue of whose sacrifice and the power of whose grace they owe their deliverance from ruin, and their preparation for, and entrance into glory, the gratitude and gladness are indescribable, with which they proclaim and magnify His love. It heightens the happiness of each to behold the vastness of their numbers. Each too finds his happiness in

the happiness of all around. That some are greater miracles of mercy, have received greater measures of light and love, have been called and enabled to labour more and to suffer more for Christ, and are now shining as stars of greater magnitude in the kingdom of the Father, is not an occasion of envy, but a source of joy, to all the rest. For each feels himself filled and blessed, up to the full measure of his capacity, with all the fulness of God. The salvation of the least of the vast assembly exhibits to himself and to all around him, a love on the part of God that none can fathom. All rejoice in the light, and love, and gladness which they find in themselves and in one another, as betokening how God dwells and walks in them, and they dwell and walk in God. And surveying the manner in which Christ first purchased them by His own sufferings and death, and then delivered them by His power, and has finally presented them faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy, they at once begin, and rejoice that they shall never cease, to magnify the glorious and blessed One who was slain, and hath redeemed them to God by His blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

II. The praises of the redeemed are followed by those of the native hosts of heaven (verse 11), "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts (or the living creatures), and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." The angels thus employed are past numbering up. This is in every respect a joyful thought. It is joyful to think, that though whole legions fell, such vast

numbers continue steadfast, and occupy their native place around the throne of God. It is joyful to think that there are so many illustrious creatures, who rejoice in the salvation of lost sinners, and help them to celebrate the grace of Jesus. Their position is round about the throne, and also round about the ransomed; so that the saints are nearer to the throne than they. This last fact is no proof of any merit in the ransomed. Nor does it excite either pride within themselves, or envy in their angelic companions. It only proves the worth of Jesus, and the virtue of His death. And if the angels stand about the throne, enclosing within their circle the countless multitude of ransomed men, it is only that they may more emphatically exalt the Redeemer, while gazing on the monuments of His matchless grace.

And so they adore Him for what He has done for the sons of men. They love the ransomed as their fellow-worshippers, feeling their need of all who will help them to praise the Lord. They love them all the more, that they have been rescued from such a guilty miserable state, at such a price, and thus restored to the service of their Maker, and raised to such dignity and usefulness as the servants and sons of God. It is no new love that they thus show to the redeemed. For while they were yet on earth struggling their way out of darkness into light, these heavenly beings ministered to them as heirs of salvation. And now that they have aided them all along, and have at length conducted them into the presence of God, their love for the redeemed is unspeakably enhanced by finding them all arrived in safety at their Father's house. And, loving them, they love far more the Benefactor to whom their salvation is owing, and so with seraphic ardour join the redeemed in adoring the Lamb that was slain.

They adore the Lord Jesus for the benefits which they

themselves derive from His death. They have not indeed been redeemed by it from sin and ruin, for they never sinned. But they have had their hatred of sin greatly deepened, and their reverence for the law and government of God greatly increased by the cross of Christ. The work of redemption has furnished them with far higher displays of the perfections and glory of God than are furnished by all the other works of His hands. In the redemption wrought out by Christ, God's almighty power, unerring wisdom, awful holiness, and amazing condescension and grace, are exhibited with an altogether peculiar glory. And nowhere else is His mercy seen at all. But for the redemption revealed in the gospel, it would never have been known to the universe that there is such an attribute as mercy in God. Moreover, by what angels have seen of God in this work of redemption, they are more confirmed in their love and obedience than by any other manifestation which they have witnessed of Him. To this work of redemption they attribute more of their enjoyment than to any other work of the Most High. And on these and other grounds they have become, in fact, a part of Christ's family, and receive through Him all the divine manifestations that are to advance them in knowledge, excellence, and blessedness, through eternal ages. Angels have thus far more benefits from Christ for which to praise Him on their own account than they can ever express or comprehend.

Angels adore Jesus also for the display which He makes of His own glorious perfections as the divine Redeemer. They adore Him as the great revealer, the visible manifestation of the invisible One. They adore Him because of His humiliation on earth, beneath which He concealed for a time those inherent perfections and that glory which are now displayed before the eyes of an adoring universe. In union with the redeemed they adore Him as "worthy to

receive all power, and wisdom, and riches, and strength, and honour, and glory."—They ascribe to Him "all power:" for though He laid aside all authority and took the form of a servant, He is the almighty upholder of all things; and as Mediator all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth.—They ascribe to Him "all wisdom:" for though He made Himself of no reputation, He is in His own nature the all-wise God; and He is also the source of wisdom to all creatures, since no man, no creature, hath seen God at any time, and the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father declares God to all who know Him.—They ascribe to Him "all riches:" for though He became poor that we through His poverty might be rich, yet the riches of the universe are His; and, over and above them, He has in His own nature the infinite fulness which suffers no diminution by supplying the wants of every living thing.—They ascribe to Him "all strength:" for though He was crucified through weakness, He is the strength of all creatures, and stronger than them all; even on His cross He spoiled principalities and powers, and the mightiest of His enemies are before Him as chaff before the wind.—They ascribe to Him "all honour:" for though His condition on earth was mean, obscure, and despised, He is the fountain of all honour to the whole family of saints and angels.—They ascribe to Him "all glory:" for though He hid not His face from shame and spitting, He shines as the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person.—They ascribe to Him "all blessing:" for He who on earth was treated as accursed by rulers and ruled, priests and people, is now magnified by all created virtuous intelligences, as at once infinitely blessed in Himself, and the source and centre of all their happiness. At the commencement of creation these morning stars sang together, and all these sons of God shouted for joy. Much more exalted will be

their praises at the commencement of the completed renovation of the universe, when creation is redeemed from the presence and effects of sin, and all things are made new. At the birth of the great Redeemer and Restorer, they filled the heavens with their praises for this event, as fraught with glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to men. When by His incarnation and ministry on earth He has actually accomplished the redemption of men, and the reconciliation of heaven and earth, and has united ransomed men and unfallen angels in one great family, and has formed the new heaven and new earth into one great temple, in which they have all assembled to meditate upon the wisdom and power, the holiness and love of God, as thus manifested, and to tell of all His wondrous works, then the praises, with which angels celebrated the birth of Jesus, will pass into the adorations and thanksgivings with which they for ever glorify Him for His accomplished work, as they stand and minister before the throne.

III. Whatever other rational and unfallen creatures, besides angels, are found in the universe, shall unite in these ascriptions of praise. Beside that portion of creation which we call heaven and earth, and its inhabitants whom we know about as angels and men, the heavenly regions, in their extended sense, include innumerable other worlds, which are probably inhabited, to a greater or less extent, by other orders of intelligent and virtuous creatures, of whom as yet we know nothing. If so, there is no ground for doubting, there is good ground for believing, that as Christ made them all, and preserves and governs them all, they too shall be summoned and privileged to unite at length in the new song of the redeemed and the angelic hosts, Christ, we know, is "head over all things to the church." The

Father is reconciling all things by Christ unto Himself, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven (in the heavens).¹ Christ, it is said, "ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." And the purpose of the Father is to "gather together," or reunite, under one head, in Christ, all things, both those which are in heaven (in the heavens) and those which are on earth, even in Him. It seems evident from such intimations as these, that the influences and effects of Christ's mediatorial work shall extend to all created intelligences, that they shall all be brought under Him as the Redeemer, and so brought nearer than otherwise they ever could have approached to God. In fact, it would seem as if they had been made chiefly for the purpose of knowing, serving, and glorifying God as the God of salvation to His people.² What God has done for sinners in and through His own Son, seems destined to give them far more glorious and soul-satisfying views of God, than all that they see of Him in all His other works. Therefore, when they see all the ransomed from the earth brought home to their final rest in the immediate presence of God; when they find all the rational and obedient creatures of God formed into one holy and happy family, from whose nature and condition all sin and disorder are finally banished, and in whose nature and society and circumstances a perfect, holy harmony is introduced that shall reign for ever: and when they look to Jesus as the great parent and producer of this state of things, and as in this work, as well as in all other works, the visible representative and manifestation of the invisible glorious God, the praises of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost shall be heard ascending in unison, not only from myriads of beings, but from myriads of worlds of worshippers.

¹ Col. i.² Eph. iii. 10.

IV. Even the inanimate creation will become vocal in praise of God the Saviour. "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." The very heavens were once defiled by the sin of the angels that kept not their first estate. This earth, especially, has been made subject to vanity by the sin of its inhabitants. And while in their impenitence they continue to burden the face of it, it is held through them in this bondage of corruption. The earth travails in pain under the curse of sin, and groans for deliverance, and keeps earnestly looking for the share that it is by and by to have in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. At present, while sinners so burden it, the earth grudges to yield to them its fruits, and the skies lower angrily over their heads. As the gospel advances in its triumphs on the earth, the very face of nature shall be lighted up with looks of health and smiles of gladness. When the way of the Lord is known upon the earth, and His saving health among all nations, the earth shall readily and plentifully yield her increase. When the earth is covered with righteous men, the very mountains and hills shall break forth before them into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

But still, as death must overtake believers before they are freed from sin and pass into a state of perfect holiness and happiness, so the visible creation must undergo its appointed dissolution, before it is brought into a state of perfect purity and beauty, a state of perfect life, and loveliness, and joy. This change, however, is at length undergone by it. The visible creation has passed through the fires of the last day, amid which the heavens have been

dissolved and the elements have melted with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein have been burned up; and the earth and visible heavens have fled away from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and no place is longer found for them. But then in their place new heavens and a new earth have risen out of the ashes of the old. A far fairer and more beauteous creation than that which made the morning stars and all the sons of God to sing and shout for joy, now stands forth to view as the appointed dwelling-place of the redeemed and angelic family of Christ. This fair creation is the work of His hands, as it is the result of His redeeming love; and it shall own the hand that made and fashioned it, by the part which it gladly performs for ever in this work of praise.

The friends of Christ are gladdened to think that however He may now be dishonoured, the time is coming when the honour due to Him shall be rendered to His name; and that His praises shall in fact fill the boundless and eternal kingdom of God.

Meanwhile their present duty is to be learning daily this work of praise, that is evidently destined to be a chief employment of heaven. This is their duty on many accounts. It is expressly enjoined: Sing unto the Lord; bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. The performance of this duty is the way to honour Him: Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me. It is alike profitable and pleasant work: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord; and to sing praise unto Thy name, O Most High; to show forth Thy loving-kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night." It is the way to prepare for heaven. The kingdom of heaven must now be begun in the soul, if we would finally enter on its everlasting services and joys. A principal part of these services and joys will consist in adoration and thanksgiving. To these exercises,

therefore, believers ought now to become accustomed. In them they are to find their happiness on earth, as their preparation for sharing in the employments and blessedness of heaven.

The leading subjects of the present meditations and praises of the followers of the Lamb, ought to be His obedience unto death, and His consequent exaltation, and their privileges in Him and from Him, as their once crucified but now exalted Redeemer. His death with what flows from it to Himself and to them is the chief burden of the songs of eternity; and therefore it ought to be the leading theme of all their praises in time.

All who hear the sound of the gospel have cause to praise the Lord. Some, indeed, imagine that they have cause only to mourn. There is, no doubt, abundant reason that all should mourn. Even believers, as they think of sin in themselves and others, may well lie low in the dust of ashes and self-abasement. But the causes are not to be overlooked that all have for gratitude if not for gladness. All that really belong to Christ have unspeakable reason to praise the Lord: some of them for their experience of joy and peace in believing; others, for darkness dissipated and light vouchsafed; others, for victory over temptation; others, for strength received for duty; others, for patience wrought in them in seasons of trial; others, for the mercy which, amidst their despondency, invites them to its embrace. Even unbelievers have unspeakable cause for thankfulness for their place amidst precious outward privileges, for the knowledge of Christ and of the way of salvation in and through Him; for a throne of grace, and for God seated on it waiting to be gracious; for the invitations, and offers, and promises of the gospel to every one that embraces them in faith; and for the assurance that all who truly seek the face of God in Christ are not left to seek in vain. Let us

then strive to have our hearts filled with the grace of Jesus, and our lips and life filled with His praise all the day long. Let us endeavour, in however feeble and imperfect a manner, to learn in time the employment that is to occupy the universe in eternity. The proper characteristic of such as are redeemed by the blood and power of Christ, is to be continually expressing their wonder at the grace received, and their thankfulness and love, in the daily song of praise. Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

XX.

CHRIST ALL AND IN ALL.

“Christ is all and in all.”—COL. iii. 11.

THE truth more immediately set before us in these words, and which we have been endeavouring to open up, is that Christ is all and in all to His redeemed. Whatever distinguishes them from the rest of the world, whatever they possess that is really good in the sight of God, whatever privileges, blessings, virtues, enjoyments, and hopes attach to their character, their condition, and their destiny, are all derived from Christ.

At the same time we are to remember that, as we have already shown, Christ is all and in all to all other creatures, as well as to the redeemed. “For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.”¹ As the Maker and Preserver of all things, He fills all creation with His presence, with His wisdom, power, and goodness; giving being and the continuance of being to the entire created universe of matter and of mind, and to everything animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, which the universe contains.

Further, as we have also made plain from scripture, the sufficiency of Christ to be all and in all not only to His redeemed but to the whole creation, flows from what He is

¹ Col. i.

in Himself and within the Godhead. For in regard of His relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit within the divine nature, as well as in His relation to the redeemed, it is said of Him in chap. ii. 9, that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." This language Calvin explains as meaning that God is wholly found in Christ; so that to go beyond Christ is to go away from God.

We have thus set forth three great relations of Christ in respect of which He is all and in all; His relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit within the Godhead; His relation to the created universe; and His relation to the redeemed.

In illustration and enforcement of our text, let us re-state, in a summary manner, what Christ is in the last of these relations, in His relation to His redeemed as their all and in all. This will be more clearly seen if we keep in view the other relations of Christ; if we first get a true though passing glimpse of Him as all in all within the Godhead, and then look at His relation to the whole created universe, and lastly, and more particularly, view Him in His character and work of incarnate Redeemer, as all and in all to each and to the whole of His ransomed people.

I. As in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," He may be viewed as all and in all in His relations to the Father and the Holy Spirit within the divine nature. Accordingly the following things are said of Him in scripture:—In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.¹ He is the only begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father.² He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person.³ He is the image of the invisible God.⁴

¹ John i.

² John i.

³ Heb. i.

⁴ Col. i.

He is God over all blessed for ever;¹ the true God, and eternal life;² the great God and our Saviour;³ the mighty God,⁴ the first and the last,⁵ searching the reins and the hearts;⁶ with His people always;⁷ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.⁸ According to these unmistakable representations of Christ in the divine word, He is the necessary, the absolute, and the everlasting expression of the whole of the divine nature within that nature; as the uncreated, co-equal, co-eternal Son of the Father He is the brightness of the divine glory in which the Father sees Himself perfectly imaged forth; He receives, experiences, comprehends, and contains the whole love of God; He is the second person in the Trinity, from whom, as well as from the Father, eternally proceeds the Holy Ghost. If in regard of the nature and perfections of God Himself Christ be thus "all in all," He is infinitely sufficient to be all in all to His people. For He has thus a power to which nothing is impossible; a wisdom that cannot err; a holiness and righteousness that will secure the reign of virtue and happiness throughout His boundless and eternal kingdom; a goodness that supplies the wants and satisfies the desires of all creatures as they wait upon Him; and a truth and faithfulness that cannot fail those who embrace and live upon His promises.

II. In regard of His relation to the created universe, Christ called into being all created things, and ever fills them with the tokens of His presence and agency. He is the maker and sustainer of the universe. To repeat the words already quoted, By Him were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be

¹ Rom. ix.³ Tit. ii.⁵ Rev. i.⁷ Matt. xxviii.² 1 John v.⁴ Isa. ix.⁶ Rev. ii.⁸ Heb. xiii.

thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things; and by Him all things consist. The whole creation, with all its capabilities and resources, is thus produced and provided for by Christ's creative energy, and full of the workings of His uncreated and infinite perfections. It is thus under His control, dependent on His sovereign power, and necessarily obedient to His will. This relation of Christ to the whole of creation, as its Maker, Preserver, Governor, and Disposer, explains the manner of the miracles which He wrought when dwelling for a time in our nature on the earth. To the leper He said, "I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."¹ When He saw Peter's wife's mother laid and sick of a fever, He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and ministered to them. When they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils, He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick. By His touch or word He made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, and even the dead to live. By His creative power He changed water into wine, and multiplied a few loaves into food for thousands. As the God of nature He walked upon the sea as we do on the firm earth; and at His bidding the stormy waves were stilled into peace. Whatever anxieties, then, or fears are experienced by the followers of Christ with reference to their own or others' present condition or future prospects, may well be allayed and vanish before the realised fact that all their interests and all events in their lot are embraced and provided for in the alike general and particular providence of Him who holds all creatures and whatever concerns them in the hollow of His hand, and is thus infinitely

¹ Matt. viii.

entitled to be looked upon by the whole and by each of His redeemed as all and in all to them.

III. In a special sense Christ is all and in all to each and to the whole of His redeemed people.

In order to His being so, He became man, God-man, the incarnate Redeemer, the Mediator between God and men. The WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us.¹ The mighty God became a child born, a Son given to us.² In the person of Christ, God was manifested in the flesh.³ And His name is Emmanuel, God with us.⁴ In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.⁵

This work of the Redeemer of men indeed was assigned to Him in the counsels of the past eternity, and undertaken by Him in His covenant with the Father. And He began this work ages before He actually became incarnate, yea, from the moment of the fall of Adam. Through the promises and prophecies, the types and figures which shadowed forth the Redeemer and the redemption provided for sinful men, He revealed Himself as the substance of all these shadows. And such as through the light given to them realised by faith His gracious presence, were made to sit beneath His shadow with great delight, and to find the fruits of His redeeming love sweet to their taste. At length He became the Son of man, and by His obedience unto death and consignment to the grave, finished the work of redemption which He had undertaken personally to accomplish on the earth. And then raising Him from the dead, the Father of glory set Him at His own right hand in the

¹ John i.

² Isa. ix.

³ 1 Tim. iii.

⁴ Matt. i.

⁵ Gal. iv.

heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.¹

The mediatorial dominion thus given to Christ is distinct from the natural dominion that belongs to God, to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as the Creator and Governor of the universe. Christ's mediatorial dominion is given to Him by the Father in His assumed character of the God-man, the Redeemer. It is given to Him to be wielded for the salvation of all for whom He died. In His possession and exercise of this mediatorial dominion, Christ fills all things, all creatures, with His presence, and with the blissful or terrible effects of His all-wise, all-powerful, all-holy, all-gracious agency. And when the grand designs of Christ's mediatorial dominion are accomplished in the final, complete, and everlasting salvation of the redeemed, His mediatorial dominion shall terminate, He shall deliver up the kingdom, that is His mediatorial kingdom, to the Father. And the natural dominion of God, of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, shall be the dominion displayed before the universe for ever and ever, that God as God may be all in all.²

Meanwhile, in virtue of His mediatorial dominion, Christ is all and in all to His people. Of His fulness they all receive, and grace for grace. He is the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Him. He is the vine; they are the branches: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can they except they abide in Him: they that abide in

¹ Eph. i.² 1 Cor. xv.

Him bring forth much fruit, and without Him they can do nothing. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ: in Him believers are builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit: in Him all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord. Believers are the body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. To see more clearly how Christ is all and in all to His people, consider first, the state in which they and all men are as sinners without Christ; and, secondly, what He is to those who believe in Him.

I. The state in which all men are, as sinners, without Christ. The very fact that He is all and in all to such as believe, implies that, apart from Him, there is nothing good, nothing but evil in their character and condition. Accordingly, the Colossians, before they became Christ's, were, as this Epistle to them reminds them, under the power of darkness; they were dead in their sins: they lived and walked in fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: they also lived in anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy (or evil-speaking), filthy communication, and falsehood: and for these things the wrath of God was ready to come down upon them as children of disobedience. This state of the Colossian believers before Christ became their Redeemer, is the state of all mankind before being made partakers of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. This is their condemnation, that even though the light of the gospel comes to them, and shines around them, they shut it out, and love the darkness rather than the light, their deeds being evil. They are within the world-wide sweep of the words, "What things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." They are under

the sentence, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." They have in them the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be. The imagination of their heart is evil from their youth. So long as they live without Christ, they live without God, and without hope in the world. Consider now—

2. What Christ becomes to any whom He finds in this condition when His Spirit takes hold of them, and brings them into saving union with Himself; when, in other words, He becomes their all and in all.

The Colossian believers were delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son: they had redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of their sins: through His death, they were reconciled to God; that He might present them holy, and unblamable, and unreprouvable, in His sight. Christ was in them the hope of glory; they were being prepared to be presented perfect in Him; risen with Christ, they set their affections on things above; and had their life hid with Christ in God: the word of Christ dwelt in them richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding: and whatsoever they did in word and deed, they endeavoured to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

And still they that are Christ's have come to know that there is salvation for them in none other; that there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby they can be saved; that an interest in Him is for them the one thing needful; that He is able to save them to the uttermost in their coming to God by Him; that at the same time if He is not all in all to them, He is nothing; and that, therefore, He is indeed all their salvation and all their desire. They have come to know all this, from the gracious dealings of Christ with their souls. For through

ignorance and error they were in darkness to all spiritual and eternal realities, until Christ by His word and Spirit opened their understandings to understand the scriptures, and their hearts to attend to the things spoken to them in His word ; until God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined in their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. As transgressors of the law of God they were exposed to His wrath, both in this life and in that which is to come : but in Christ, their surety and substitute, who, once in the end of the world, appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, they now have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. As the perfect fulfilment of all and every one of the commandments of God's holy and unchangeable law must remain for ever to all rational creatures the one unchangeable condition of His favour and of eternal life, so far as any personal obedience of theirs was concerned, they were utterly and for ever excluded from acceptance with God and from the enjoyment of His favour : but Christ fulfilled all righteousness in their behalf : for them He magnified the law and made it honourable : by His obedience they are now made righteous ; He is Jehovah their righteousness ; they are made the very righteousness of God in Him : in Him they have a title to the skies ; a title, against which no plea from any quarter will avail, since it is God Himself that justifieth. While their eyes continued closed to Christ, or turned away from Him, they had not a friend in earth or heaven that could dare to take up their cause, and stand in the divine presence, and attempt to plead their cause before the High and Holy One, and seek for a moment to avert His anger due to their iniquities : but their eyes have been opened by Christ on His work as their High Priest, in shedding His blood in sacrifice for them on earth, and then in passing with it into the holiest of all, to present Himself

before the mercy-seat as their advocate with the Father ; and by this appearing in the presence of God for them, He is proving able, and they look to Him as able, to save them to the uttermost, in their coming to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth thus to make intercession for them. They were depraved in their moral nature ; sinful in heart and life ; perverse in spirit ; rebellious ; easily tempted ; enslaved and carried captive by sin and Satan and the world : their bondage to moral evil was irremediable so far as their own utmost efforts were concerned : they were earthly ; prayerless ; alienated from God ; hopelessly enthralled by carnal-mindedness : and, so far as creature help availed, they were destined only to continue departing further and further from God, until they perished in their own corruption. But Christ found them in that condition ; and, in a day of His power, He made them willing to serve Him in the beauty of holiness ; He quickened them from their death in trespasses and sins, and became Himself the life of their souls : He cast out of them the wicked one ; and delivered them from this present evil world : by His blood and grace they are being sanctified in all their faculties and powers, in their habits and whole conduct, in their hearts and lives ; and are being made to die to sin and live to righteousness : by the cross of Christ, the world is crucified to them, and they to the world : they are crucified with Christ, nevertheless they live, yet not they, but Christ liveth in them ; and the life which they live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them, and gave Himself for them. They were outcasts and hopeless wanderers in a fatherless world ; but Christ, having redeemed them, has found them out, and brought them into the divine family, and God has given to them the adoption of sons, and put into them the Spirit of His Son, crying *Abba, Father.*

In many other ways is Christ His people's all and in all. They love and search the scriptures, because they testify

of Him; and because He sanctifies and cleanses them with the washing of water by His word. They are habitually drawn to the throne of grace for mercy to pardon and grace to help in time of need, because through Christ they have access by one Spirit unto the Father. They cultivate and enjoy fellowship with christian brethren, because where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus, He is in the midst of them. All the ordinances of the gospel are loved and waited on, because in them the Good Shepherd leads His flock to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters, restoring their souls, and leading them in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. In all providences they seek to realise the hand of Christ; remembering that to Him, as governor among the nations, all power is given in heaven and on earth, and that He is making all things to labour together for their good. They are under law to Christ, and keep His commandments, and so abide in His love. He is their strength for all duty; for while without Him they can do nothing, through His strengthening them they can do all things. He is their example and pattern in all duty; for they are to have the same mind in them that was also in Christ, and are to walk even as He walked; and He hath given them an example that they should walk in His steps. And He is their motive to all duty; for they are to love Him who first loved them; and, as bought with a price (the price of His precious blood), they are to glorify God with their soul and body, and spirit, which are His. Insufficient in themselves for such a life, they are to come to Christ to make His grace sufficient for them, and to perfect His strength in their weakness. Empty in themselves, they come to Him and are filled out of His fulness. When their souls cleave to the dust, they come to Christ, and He quickens them according to His word. With the impurities from which they need deliverance, they come to Christ, and He works

in them as their refiner and purifier, until His own image is reflected from their character. In the time of perplexity they come to Christ as the rock higher than they. Under the pressure of varied anxieties and trials, they cast their burdens on Christ, and He suffers them not to be moved. In their tribulations they cling to the compassionate and mighty Redeemer, and He saves them from either despising the chastening of the Lord, or fainting under His rebuke: He proves their hiding-place from the wind, their covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And when they come at length to the solemn crisis of their history, when earth and time are vanishing from their sight, and eternity is immediately before them, and their dearest friends on earth must leave them to pass alone to their destiny, and their own heart and flesh are failing, there is still nigh to them the one all-sufficient, never-failing Friend, holding in His hands the keys of all the unseen and eternal regions, opening up their way, and guiding them in safety to their home.

Conclusion.

The practical importance of the words before us is evidenced by the more immediate design with which they were uttered.

The words "but Christ is all and in all" are introduced by the apostle as the conclusive reason for the Colossians, and so for all believers, departing from every evil way, and devoting themselves to a holy and heavenly life, so as to be, one and all, living epistles of Christ, and to reflect His holy and blessed image. Says he, "Set your affections on things above. . . Mortify your members which are upon the earth, . . . uncleanness, inordinate affection, . . . and covetousness, which is idolatry . . . Also put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, . . . seeing that ye have put off the

old man with his deeds ; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him ; where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free ; but Christ is all and in all." And surely the consideration, imperfect as it is, that we have just been giving to these words, is fitted, as the words are designed, to make us see clearly and feel deeply that as, away from Christ, mankind are spiritually in darkness, bondage, and death, so in Him alone can any have spiritual light and life ; and, further, that all who are in Him have it equally and alike. Within the spiritual region of the redeeming work of Christ, and of His people's corresponding dependence on and obedience to Him, no earthly distinctions of any kind are recognised, or of any avail, or are so much as allowed to assert their presence. The natural character and condition, and the natural attainments or characteristics of such as become the subjects of Christ's saving work, contribute nothing to its efficiency and excellence, and present nothing fatally to hinder its success. The wisdom of the Greek, the outward religious actings and attainments of the Jew, the ignorance and superstition of the barbarian, the fiendlike cruelty of the fiercest savage, the utter degradation of the enslaved, and the energy of the free, the profoundest acquaintance of the man of science with the secrets of creation, the insight into nature of the moralist or the poet, the highest scholarship and culture of the man of letters, and the ignorance, rudeness, and moral and social debasement of the unreclaimed and sunken, are respectively neither necessarily effectual helps on the one hand, nor necessarily effectual obstacles on the other hand, to the redeeming work which Christ accomplishes in the subjects of His grace. Whatever happens to be, or to become, men's natural characteristics or actual attainments, so far as regards their admission to, or exclusion from, the divine presence and

favour, they are all on the same level, there is no difference between them as transgressors of the law of God so long as they remain out of Christ; and if they are enabled to come nigh to God, and to find acceptance with Him, it must be by finding the ground of their dependence before Him, outside of themselves, and in a finished work, to which they have contributed and can contribute nothing. For, however diversified their natural character, condition, and circumstances, there is in each and all of them alike a guiltiness which it requires the same atonement to cancel; there is in each of them a darkening spiritual ignorance of God, and of all divine and eternal things, which it requires the same illumination from above to remove; there is an enmity of the carnal mind in each of them to God, which it requires the same manifestation of His love as seen in the cross of Christ, to slay. There is a subjection in each of them to the power of the great tempter and deceiver and adversary, from which it requires the same interposition of Christ, the destroyer of Satan's work, to give deliverance. There is a natural and inveterate enslavement of each of them to the evil maxims, customs, and examples prevailing around them, from the fetters of which it requires the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Spirit of Christ to set them free. They are all made to experience personal and relative afflictions, which serve a blessed end only in so far as, by means of them, the same softening, purifying, and strengthening grace of Christ brings them into subjection to the Father of spirits, makes them partakers of His holiness, and prepares them for having death swallowed up of life. In short, all human creatures, from the highest to the humblest, in order to their profiting by the truth as it is in Jesus, must, as sinners, take the same place in the dust before God, must be brought to rest on the same foundation, on the one foundation of a sinner's hope, must derive all light and life and peace from the same fulness of Christ, must be delivered

into the same gospel mould, must be stamped with the same divine image, must look to Christ, and yield to Him, and be filled by His grace, and fashioned by His hand, must rely on Him alone, and place themselves unreservedly at His disposal as ALL AND IN ALL.

The life of all the redeemed from the earth is thus from first to last derived from Christ, and found in Him alone. And when at length they are taken to His presence, they find His fulness which fills them to be the same fulness of God which pervades the entire works of His hands, from the highest intelligences and holiest worshippers in His immediate presence, to the lowliest of the endless grades of being that make up His boundless and eternal kingdom. The Lamb in the midst of the throne shall eternally be to all holy creatures, as well as to the redeemed, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, the visible image of the for ever invisible God. They shall ever behold Him as the co-worker with the Father and the Holy Spirit in calling creation into existence, and in ceaselessly filling it with such endless tokens of divine power, wisdom, and goodness. Especially they shall for ever look to Him as the Redeemer, who by such a wondrous manifestation and work of God in our nature on the earth, raised such myriads out of their ruined state into the ransomed family of God. And as they continue to gaze into the unfathomable depths of wisdom, holiness, and love which redemption displays, higher and higher degrees of knowledge, love, and enjoyment of God shall be reached, and correspondingly loftier praises shall ascend to the throne of God and of the Lamb.





